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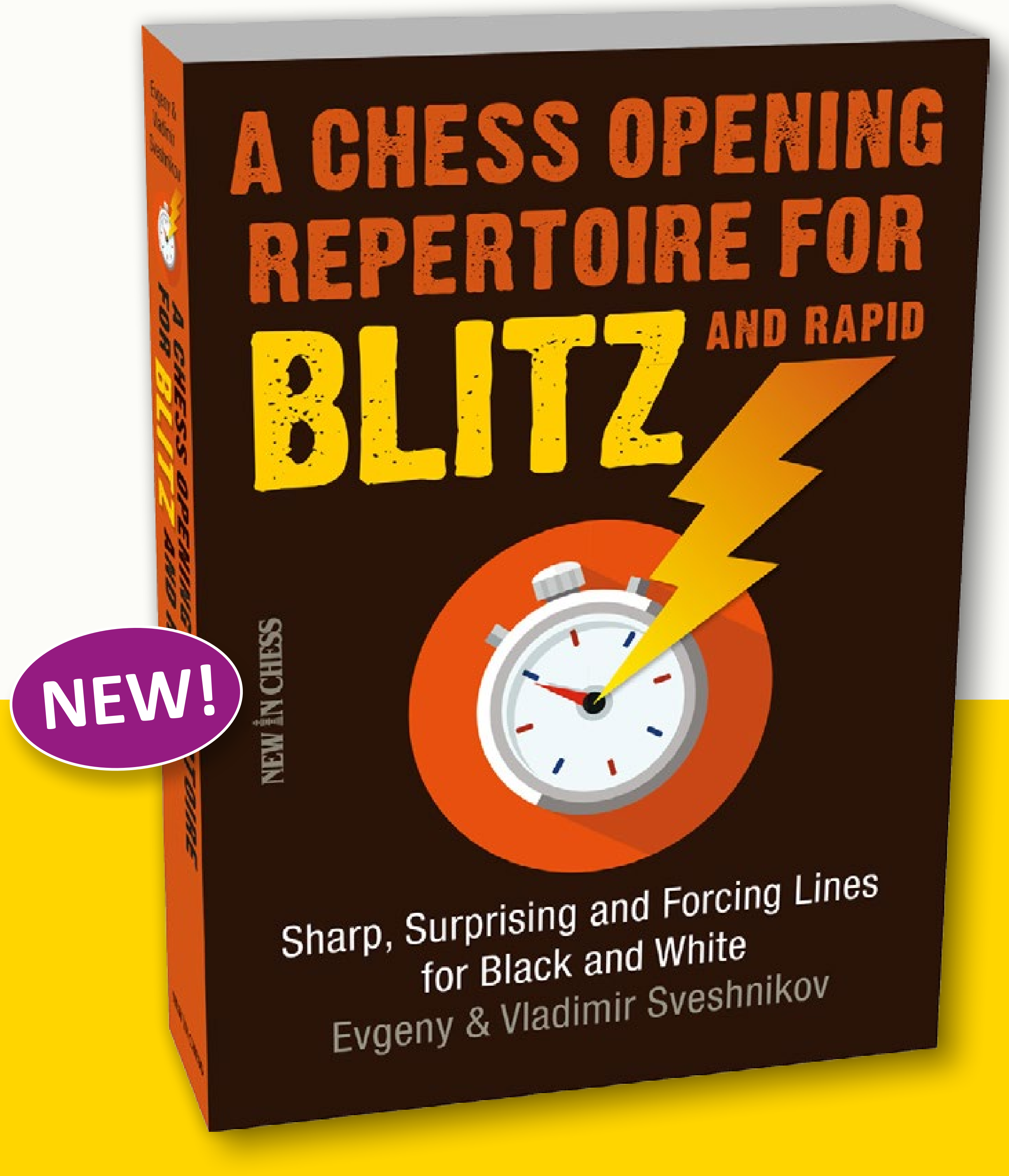
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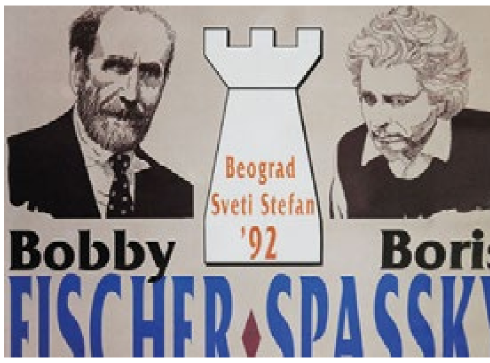

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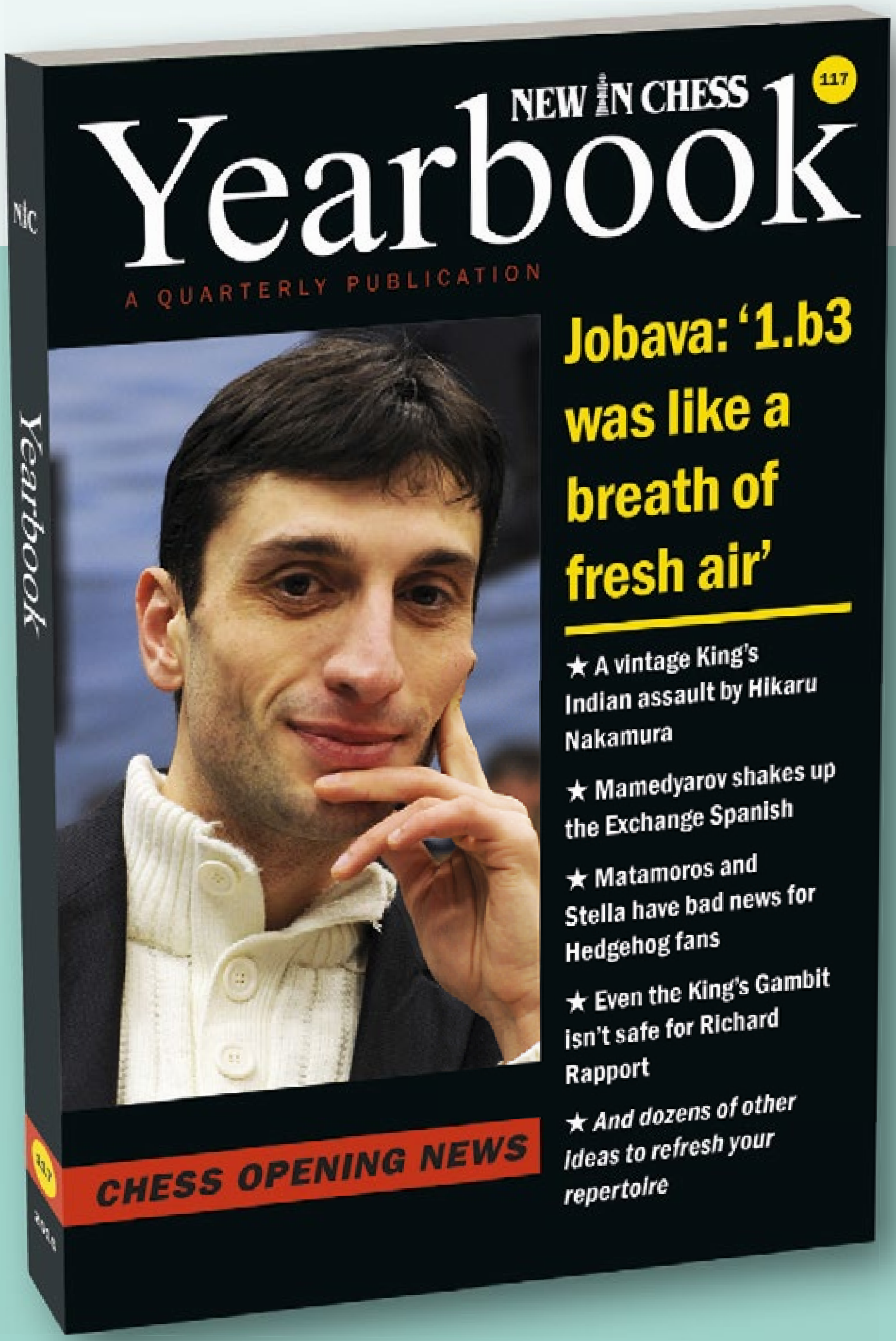
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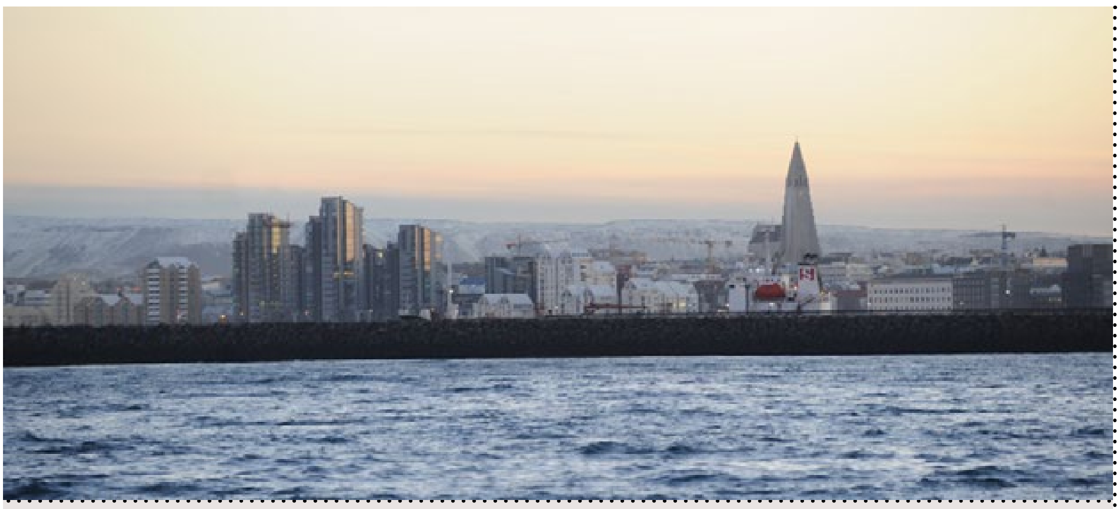

'I tend not to play good games, but interesting games.'

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COVER

Anish Giri: New In Chess

WELCOME
TO THE

'I will not hide the fact that at this moment I was very pleased with myself, a fact noticed by the Dutch wunderkind Anish Giri, who came up to our board and approvingly nodded to me.' *Levon Aronian (in the notes to his win over Magnus Carlsen in Reykjavik)*

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New author, new engine

Vasik Rajlich is new to the Fritz team. The American shook up the world of computer chess just a few years ago, reaching the top with his program, "Rybka". He is the author of the new Fritz 15 engine, so there's no question that it will be one of the world's strongest!

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Season's greetings

Who would be the happiest person in this issue? A good guess might be Alexander Grischuk, who won the World Blitz Championship for the third time. These days the Russian no longer campaigns for the abolition of classical chess – why take away from your colleagues what so many of them love? – but for him the real thing remains the fastest time-control. In Berlin, Grischuk celebrated his win with a yell of delight that resounds in the witty and engrossing account he wrote for us.

Levon Aronian is definitely happy, too. The Armenian got the wildcard for the Candidates' Tournament in Moscow, as the sponsor happens to be a fellow countryman with a passion for chess. And he may well be one of the favourites next March, if we go by his flashy win over Magnus Carlsen in Reykjavik. Don't miss his notes to this game – vintage Aronian.

And of course our contributing editor Anish Giri is happy, the youngest participant in the Candidates'. The Dutchman has not only become one of the strongest players on the planet, but also one of the sharpest and humoristic observers of the chess elite. Not to be missed either.

In our anniversary issue Nigel Short (arbiters, check out his latest column!) praised Vladimir Kramnik for his phenomenal analysis. This time the former World Champion doesn't give a masterclass on the King's Indian, but explains how he defeated his old rival Veselin Topalov. For deeper insights in the King's Indian we gladly refer you to Yannick Pelletier and Wesley So, who defeated two outstanding KI specialists, Hikaru Nakamura and Ding Liren.
You're more interested in the Marshall? Take a tour with Peter Svidler.

The year is drawing to a close and a new year is approaching. A year full of promises with the Candidates', the Olympiad, the World Championship match and, of course, your own games! Keep improving your play with the lessons and suggestions of expert instructors such as Judit Polgar and Parimarjan Negi.

We wish you a Happy New Year with lots of great chess.

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam
Editor-in-Chief

> 'Grischuk celebrated his win with a yell of delight that resounds in the witty and engrossing account he wrote for us.'

Finding Nirvana… and chess

'Brace yourself', warns the Lonely Planet guide. 'You're about to enter one of the most blindingly colourful, unrelentingly chaotic and unapologetically indiscreet places on earth.' And this is exactly the experience Hong Kong-based street photographer Gary Tyson had when he recently visited Varanasi, the oldest city in India, and claimed by Hindus (according to their beliefs) to be the first place to exist in the universe…

It sits close to the holy River Ganges and long before the Beatles shuffled their bleary-eyed way along here in 1968, it has been a centre of Hinduism and a resting place for pilgrims on their way into the mountains. This is the most favoured place they go to die in India, as they believe burning at the ghats on the river is a direct route to Nirvana (heaven) for them.

As Tyson continued his odyssey, he said he was surprised that on almost every street corner he would find children and elders playing chess. Tyson's father is a keen player, so he continued snapping the chess scenes and could not fail to notice how seriously they take their chess there; with some betting money and getting quite animated when they win or lose games.

CHESSMEN

Global Warming

Ah, the joys of retirement! A time in life to take it easy, put your feet up, stop worrying about deadlines or responsibilities. But not, it seems, if your name just happens to be Judit Polgar!

Since retiring from competitive play last year, Judit seems to have had a busier schedule than ever. You may have noticed that she has become a New In Chess columnist and that she made her debut as the captain of the Hungarian team at the recent European Team Championship in Reykjavik. But what keeps Judit busier than anything else is the Global Chess Festival, organized by the Judit Polgar Foundation. The festival has been going since 2007, and this year's edition in the Castle Garden Bazaar, on the bank of the Danube in Budapest, proved to be the biggest and best yet, with a smorgasbord of chess and educational activities, jugglers, clowns, simuls, lessons, marzipan chess sets, celebrities and politicians. But mainly there were kids having fun with chess – lots of kids!

Judit Polgar is rightly proud of her immensely popular Global Chess Festival.

The name-change this year reflects Judit's big wish to truly turn this into a global annual festival with satellite events joining in from all over the world. 'Our goal is to attract five million people from five continents to join the Global Chess Festival within the next 10 years', said Judit. And they are off to a promising start: 10 cities on four continents joined this year's edition by organizing events at the same time, from Santiago de Chile to Melbourne and Miami.

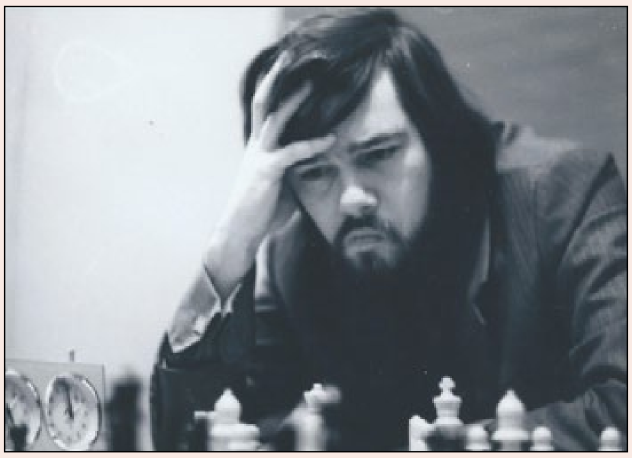
And Judit plans to have the festival on the same date every year: the second Saturday in October. So make contact now with the organizers at www.globalchessfestival.com to plan joining forces on October 8, 2016!

Do You Remember Walter?

With apologies to the 1968 hit from The Kinks, but the title seemed apt, as we've recently been fondly remembering no less a person than Walter Shawn Browne, with news reaching us of the palaver over the clearing of his estate after his tragic death back in the summer.

His widow Raquel originally comes from Argentina; so she decided that she'd much rather sell their house in Berkeley, California, and return home to be closer to her immediate family. This is a very natural thing to do, but what to do about Walter's vast collection of chess memorabilia?

John Donaldson – who helped enormously in what became quite an onerous task – informs us that most of Walter's main chess items (such as trophies, medals and his U.S. Championship rings) rightly went to the World Chess Hall of Fame in St. Louis. But Walter was a pack rat who kept almost everything (including, dare we say it, an Amazon rainforest's worth of his *Blitz Chess* magazine!).



Walter Browne held remarkable views on his rival Bent Larsen's play.

Clearing out Browne's chess study, Donaldson found a curiously crumpled-up sheet of A4 notepaper. After straightening it, he found Walter's scribbled thoughts (mid-1970s) on his rival Bent Larsen. According to Walter's aide-memoire, 'Bent Larsen talks about my addiction to time-pressure, but actually he suffers from move mania or non-stop moves or unthinkability[sic], which has kept and always will keep him from the very top.' And also that 'Larsen is the master of simplicity, yet Bobby and Boris make him look like a child', and finally, 'Larsen is a great self-acclaimed endgame expert but against Bobby he never reached the ending!'

That's a Rap

If video killed the radio star, as one-hit wonders The Buggles suggested, then in 1988 it also helped to create the rap star. That was the year an MTV producer persuaded his higher-ups to put a show about hip-hop onto the airwaves. That show, dubbed *Yo! MTV Raps* exposed a mainstream American audience to urban music and made it possible for some of the iconic images of rap to be born.

Emerging from this urban ether was the Wu-Tang Clan, led by Robert Fitzgerald Diggs, better known by his stage name of RZA – and for many years he's played chess, sometimes competitively, and now he's found a way to use the game as a means of giving a sizeable donation to the Hip-Hop Chess Federation (HHCF).

Speaking in early October to more than 400 high school students from all across the St. Louis area – many of whom reside in the flash-point area of Ferguson – RZA took time out to play chess with some of the area's incarcerated youth before making a donation directly to HHCF founder Adisa Banjoko, who acted as MC for the event.

'Y'all are in here for not controlling your energy, yo', RZA told those gathered at the juvenile hall. 'You are here now for not being analytical about the results of the actions you have taken. I'm the last one to talk in some sense. I've been through the same system... Me and my brother got our first gun when I was 11 or 12... Riding NY city buses looking for what they call, a "vic"'.

RZA's route to self-reflection and better decision-making.

Stressing that immersing himself in literature and chess offered a route to self-reflection and better decision-making, RZA expounded on the benefits of practising the centuries-old game of strategy: 'It's a game of chess in one sense, but in another it's a study of life. We in the Hip-Hop Chess Federation are striving to bring awareness to Americans, to Black youth, to the whole of American youth... Chess study, along with martial arts, along with music – is the best way to help develop your mind and body and protect you from pitfalls in life that will surely come at you.'

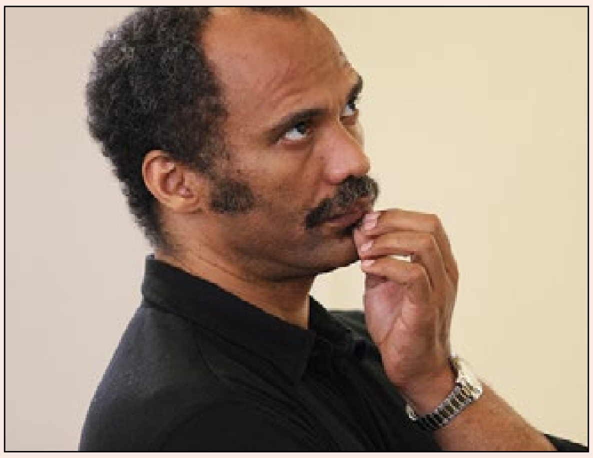
Death of a Gunslinger

Some players get to die the way they lived, and this could well be the epitaph for IM Emory Tate, a five-time Armed Forces Champion and one of the strongest African-American players in the history of the U.S., who collapsed mid-game while playing in a weekend tournament in Milpitas, near San Jose, California, in mid-October and died shortly afterwards. He was 56.

Despite being 'only' an IM, Tate took on an almost revered cult status in the U.S. game; even being compared favourably with Soviets Rashid Nezhmetdinov and Genrikh Chepukaitis – a select band of players who never won major tournaments or made it to GM, yet were feared beyond parallel by the top grandmasters.

Tate was born in Chicago and later went on to join the United States Air Force as a linguist, specialising in Russian, and was stationed overseas, mainly in the UK and Germany. He rose through the ranks to become a staff sergeant; but as the Cold War cooled off in the early 1990s, he had to return home to Indiana, where he soon found life difficult without military discipline; from that point on, he had to do constant battle with his inner demons.

But he soon took to the U.S. Swiss circuit and became something of a chess nomad, travelling around the vastness of America on Greyhound buses and crisscrossing the country, playing from coast to coast. This was the gunslinger who would think nothing of taking a 30-hour bus journey on the infamous 'Dirty Dog', just to play in a tournament, regardless of its size, strength or prize fund.



JOHN HENDERSON

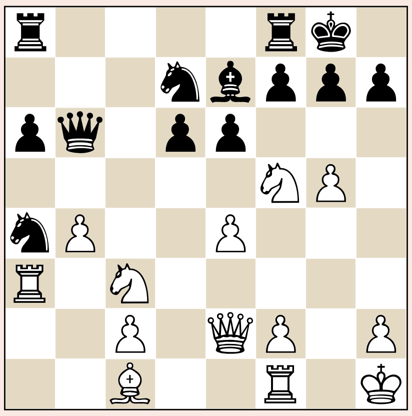
Emory Tate: sacrificial shoot-outs that would have made Mikhail Tal sit up and take notice.

And Tate had the mentality of a gunslinger from the old Wild West. He shot down many dozens of top grandmasters during his career; some putting the tally at over 80. But it wasn't just that he could beat GMs – it was the manner in which he did it, with many scintillating, sacrificial shoot-outs that would have made Mikhail Tal sit up and take notice.

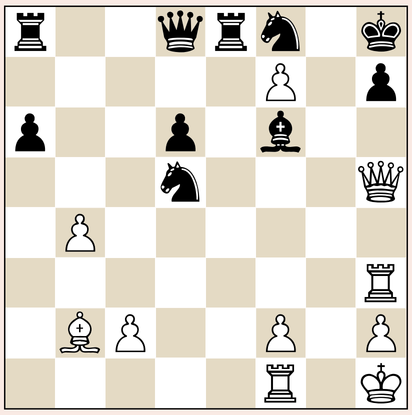
With many great attacking gems to choose from, we'll leave you with one that is regarded among his very best.

SI 13.6 – B86
Emory Tate
Leonid Yudasin
U.S. Masters 1997

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗c4 e6 7.♗b3 ♘bd7 8.♕e2 ♘c5 9.g4 b5 10.g5 ♘fd7 11.♗d5!? ♗b7 12.♗xb7 ♘xb7 13.a4 bxa4 14.♖xa4 ♘bc5 15.♖a3 ♕b6 16.0-0 ♗e7 17.♔h1 0-0 18.b4!? ♘a4 The complications after 18...♕xb4 19.♘c6 ♕b7 20.♘xe7+ ♔h8 21.♘cd5 clearly favour White. **19.♘f5!**



Typical Tate and very Tal-like! **19...exf5 20.♘d5 ♕d8 21.exf5 ♖e8 22.♕h5 ♘ab6 23.♖h3 ♘f8 24.f6 ♘xd5 25.fxg7 ♔xg7 26.♗b2+ ♔g8 27.g6 ♗f6 28.gxf7+ ♔h8**



29.♖g1 The clinical finish was 29.♕g4!, with a forced mate in 5. **29...♖e1 30.♖xe1 ♗xb2 31.♖e8 ♘f6 32.♖xd8 ♖xd8 33.♕h6 ♘e4 34.♕h4! ♘f6 35.♖g3 ♘8d7 36.♕g5** Black resigned. ■

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Annotators include Kasparov (630 games), Fischer (10), Karpov (580), Kramnik (442), Anand (507), Botvinnik (29), Smyslov (130), Tal (372), Petrosian (510), Spassky (17), Gligoric (685), Timman (569), Gelfand (517), Adams (428), Larsen (416), Polugaevsky (339), Nunn (317), Shirov (515), Ivanchuk (403), Ponomariov (136), Topalov (55), Browne (249), Dominguez (340), Miles (485) ...

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Finally!

I am delighted to see that, at long last, New In Chess has a regular columnist who is a woman. Not just any woman, in fact, but the greatest woman player in recorded chess history! However, there is a long way to go towards establishing gender balance in your otherwise excellent publication. I hope that this first step indicates a commitment to create more opportunities for women writers.

Dr. Richard Ingram
Vancouver, Canada

Editorial postscript:

They are most welcome, as they always have been!

When Patti met Bobby

It is Bobby Fischer again. He refuses to go away. With interest I read the NIC's Café item in New In Chess 2015/7 about Patti Smith's new book *M Train*, in which she describes her meeting with Bobby in Iceland. Indeed, the 'bodyguard' who accompanied Bobby that evening was I. In the meantime I have read the relevant pages of *M Train*. It really amazes me when people write with such disregard of the truth. Where to begin? Perhaps that the meeting didn't take place in 2007, but in September 2005. She writes: '(...) I received a call from a man identifying himself as Bobby Fischer's bodyguard. He had been charged with arranging a midnight meeting between Mr. Fischer and myself in the closed dining room of the Hotel Borg. I was to bring my bodyguard, and would not be permitted to bring up the subject of chess.' Well, I never called her. The promoter of her concerts in Reykjavik called me and asked if a meeting between the two could be arranged. This is what I did. I was about to leave the hotel when Patti asked me to stay with them. I never told her not to mention chess with Bobby. They met at a restaurant on the first floor of Hotel Borg between 22.00 and 23.00 hrs. on Tuesday September 6th, shortly after her concert at NASA, a nearby concert hall. The restaurant was open for all guests at the hotel, but it was a really quiet place. Bobby certainly didn't start the conversation, as she writes, with 'one of his tirades'. He was very polite, almost shy.

Write to us

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Letters may be edited or abridged

She ends her description of the meeting as follows: 'Do you know any Buddy Holly songs?' he asked. For the next few hours we sat there singing songs. Sometimes separately, often together, remembering about half the lyrics. At one point he attempted a chorus of *Big Girls Don't Cry* in falsetto and his bodyguard burst in excitedly. – Is everything alright, sir? – Yes, Bobby said. – I thought I heard something strange. – I was singing. – Singing? – Yes, singing.

And that was my meeting with Bobby Fischer, one of the greatest chess players of the twentieth century. He drew up his hood and left just before first light.'

As Patti Smith and Bobby talked, I was sitting with them, but hardly said anything, as I didn't want to interrupt their conversation. Among other topics, they discussed music, but they didn't sing at all. Not a single song. Bobby did not know much about her career in music and arts, but when they parted he gracefully thanked her for their time together. That is how I remember this meeting.

Helgi Olafsson,
Reykjavik, Iceland

From Vienna to Venice with love

How is it possible that as lovers of chess and James Bond you provide wrong information in the short article on the new James Bond film Spectre in New In Chess 2015/7? When you write that the chess scene in Spectre pays homage to Bond's first encounter with Spectre in From Russia With Love, which contains a chess scene shot at the 'Vienna International Chess Tournament'.

I love chess and movies, so I don't know if you need new glasses or if you should look at the opening scene of From Russia With Love again. Where the banner in the chess scene with Kronsteen and MacAdams clearly reads 'Venice International Grandmaster Tournament'.

Okay! I love your magazine, but I also love correct information when it is about something that I know about and love!

Peter Trier
Herning, Denmark

Editorial postscript:

Apologies! You are obviously right. Kronsteen and MacAdams played their famous Spassky-Bronstein inspired game in the 'Venice International Grandmaster Tournament'.

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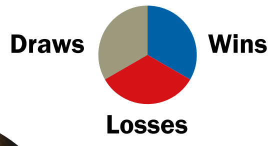
The Candidates: Who Can Beat Carlsen?

Last month, the final list for the Candidates' tournament in March 2016 was announced. All of the players are among the world's elite, but which one would be the toughest test for World Champion Magnus Carlsen? The following graphic attempts to answer that question by looking at the winning percentages (wins plus draws, divided by number of games) and records of each player against Carlsen at classical time controls. The data are in two parts: games from 2008 to 2012, and from 2013, the year Carlsen became champion, to early November 2015. Games before 2008, when Carlsen joined the world's elite, have been omitted.

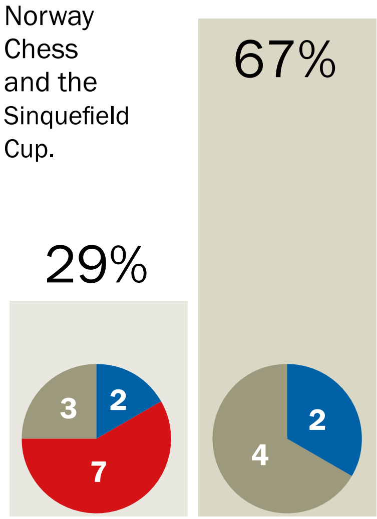
DYLAN LOEB McCLAIN

▨ 2008 to 2012 ▨ 2013 to present



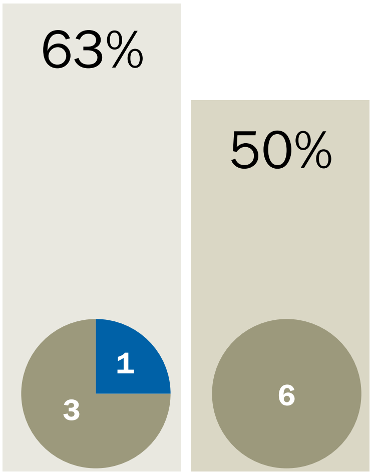
Veselin Topalov

Topalov had a poor record against Carlsen until this year, when he beat him in Norway Chess and the Sinquefield Cup.



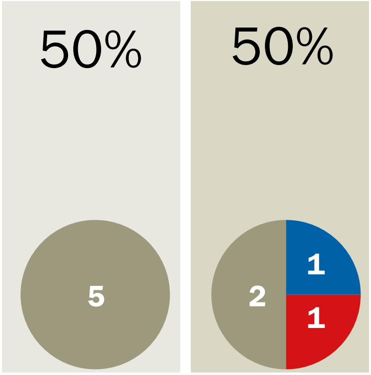
Anish Giri

Giri is the only one who has a positive score against Carlsen, though it is based on a small number of games.



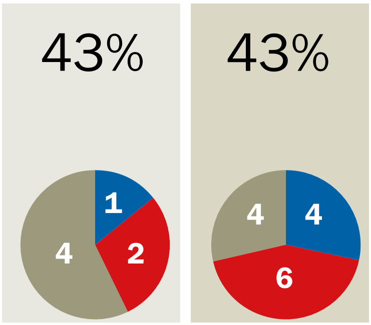
Peter Svidler

Though he is the lowest ranked player in the field, Svidler has done well against Carlsen, including beating him in the last round of the 2013 Candidates'.



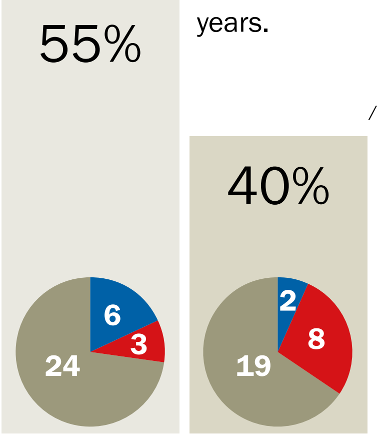
Fabiano Caruana

Caruana could pose a formidable challenge, as he has beaten Carlsen more than any other player in the field since the beginning of 2013.



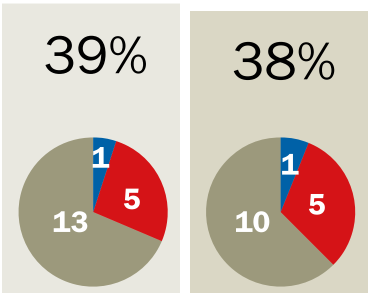
Viswanathan Anand

No one has more experience against Carlsen. But Anand's results have slipped in the last three years.



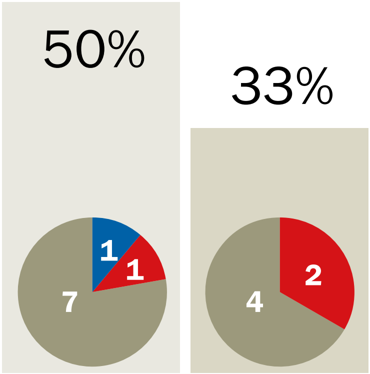
Levon Aronian

Aronian has played the second-most number of games against Carlsen. He had not been doing well until he beat Carlsen at the 2015 European Team Championships.



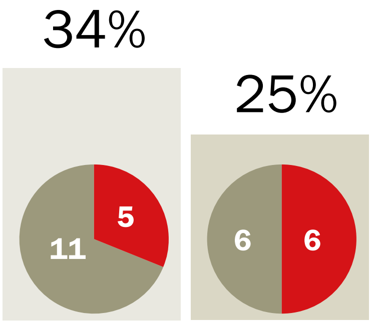
Sergey Karjakin

Karjakin has been difficult for Carlsen (and everybody else) to beat, but he has only beaten Carlsen once.



Hikaru Nakamura

Nakamura has the worst record against Carlsen. He has lost 11 times and never beaten him. But he has been a bit steadier lately, having drawn his last three games.



Fair & Square

Aung San Suu Kyi: 'If you look at the democratic process as a game of chess, there have to be many, many moves before you get to checkmate. And simply because you do not make any checkmate in three moves does not mean it's stalemate. There's a vast difference between no checkmate and stalemate. This is what the democratic process is.'
(The Myanmar opposition leader and Nobel peace prize laureate, whose National League for Democracy party recently won a landslide election victory – the first free elections in 25 years)

Peter Svidler: 'In order to avoid playing opening theory you need to study a lot of opening theory!'
(The seven-time Russian champion on the play of Magnus Carlsen)

Gary Rose: 'It's quite possible Hillary will come out looking even stronger from this. It will be a political chess game, watching how each side makes its move. Hillary has mastered dodging questions and turning the tables.'
(The Connecticut professor of political science, talking to the press ahead of what turned out to be a grandmaster performance from US presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, as she appeared before the House Select Committee on Benghazi)

Magnus Carlsen: '(Chess) doesn't feel like working. Of course it's how I earn money, but I just think about it as a way to have fun. Sometimes, it feels as though it's my life. Especially at tournaments. The whole atmosphere. The excitement. I find myself thinking "This is where I want to be". It draws me in!'
(The World Champion in 'Scandinavian Traveler', the Scandinavian Airlines' online magazine)

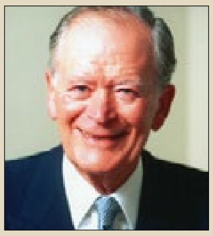
Alexander Kotov: 'Fickle fortune rules in chess, though is this true only of chess?'

Vladimir Kramnik: 'I am a man of principle. I don't have any respect towards Topalov and everyone knows it. I don't see the sense of having fake handshakes with him and I won't consider changing my attitude until he apologises publicly. Will this ever change? Let's wait another 20-30 years and see how it goes...'
(After beating Veselin Topalov at the European Club Cup in Skopje)

Vladimir Putin: 'It's always difficult to play a double game: declaring a fight against terrorists while simultaneously trying to use some of them to arrange the pieces on the Middle East chess board in one's interests.'
(The Russian president, speaking in October at a meeting of political scientists known as the Valdai Club)

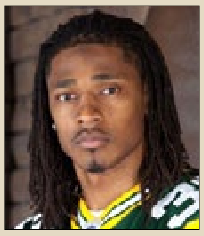
Geoffrey Boycott: 'With spinners it's like chess, get rid of the rooks and it's a worse game.'
(The legendary England & Yorkshire opening batsman and now leading cricket commentator)

Laszlo Hazai: 'Opening theory is a never-ending story and ideas cannot be fresh for ever. You always work for today and tomorrow only. This is not frustrating; it's just how life is. Chess changes so rapidly that after six months without study you cannot just play your old line – that can be a terrible trap.'



Jim Slater: 'If you aren't afraid of Spassky, then I have removed the element of money.'
(The chess-loving London city financier, who died recently, in a press statement to Bobby Fischer, after he stepped in with $125,000 to save the 1972 Fischer-Spassky match)

Jan Hein Donner: 'A chess player produces nothing, creates nothing. He only has one aim: the destruction of his opponent.'



Tramon Williams: 'He's probably the greatest mastermind to play the game... he's playing chess. A lot of people may be playing checkers, and he's playing chess. As a defence and as a team, we have to play chess, too.'
(The Cleveland Brown cornerback, talking about Peyton Manning, the Denver Broncos star quarterback)

The Herald: 'If constitutional politics was chess, Nicola Sturgeon would be contemplating the endgame. One by one, her opponents' pieces have been captured. Move by move, she seems closer to checkmate, or even to the moment when the UK's grandmasters resign in despair.'
(Opening editorial paragraph in The Herald, Scotland's leading newspaper, on a further referendum vote from First Minister Nicola Sturgeon)

They were the favourites and they confidently won the European Team Championship. But aren't the Russians almost always the favourites? Yes, they are, but the last time they actually proved themselves to be the best in Europe was eight years ago! Russian team captain **MARK GLUKHOVSKY** digs into the mystery.

Russian relief in Reykjavik

The Reykjavik skyline seen from the sea. On the right the Cathedral. In the middle the white building complex where Bobby Fischer lived.

NEW IN CHESS

Over the last ten years the most fervent supporters of the Russian men's team have experienced the whole gamut of emotions of the terminally ill. In order these are: denial, anger, depression, and finally humility. Which is not surprising: since 2005, when the team finished in 14th(!) place in Gothenburg, the Russian men have only once finished first in the championships of the continent. Although accustomed to much in life, Russians are not accustomed to humiliation at the chess board, and therefore the defeats of the men's teams have been taken pretty badly in the Russian chess community. And even the excellent results of the Russian women, who over the same years have been transformed into the strongest team in the world, have for many proved poor consolation.

In starting my account of the European Championship in Reykjavik, I must say a few words about my first experience as captain of the Russian team in April 2015, when the World Team Championship was held in that blessed country Armenia. As a person light-headed from the whole range of emotions described in the opening paragraph, I chose for myself the first. Denial. It simply cannot be that with *such* a team (it comprised Grischuk, Tomashevsky, Karjakin, Jakovenko and Vitiugov) we will not take first place. Over the next ten days I had to endure all the remaining gamut of emotions, including even uncharacteristic humility. In the 2015 World Championship the Russian men's team did not even finish among the medals.

At the same time I did not manage to answer for myself the main question. How to explain that excellent players, who spend their lives at the top of the chess pyramid, when united in a team repeatedly produce mediocre results? Why, while winning in the World Cup and performing successfully in all the strongest tournaments of the world, are they capable in a team tournament of losing, for example, to the Czech Republic or to Turkey, Spain or Cuba? How is this altogether possible?

> ‘Although accustomed to much in life, Russians are not accustomed to humiliation at the chess board.’

Here I am obliged to grossly violate the rules of literary composition and warn the reader that, even after reading this article to the end, he will not find a direct answer to this question. As compensation, the reader will be given a tour of the most amazing and mysterious universe in the chess world – the Russian men’s national team.

The first, and perhaps the chief difficulty facing the captain of the Russian national team is the choice of players. In most countries of the world this question is resolved very simply: on first board is placed the country’s only player with a rating of +2700, on board two – his historic rival, and on the next two and the reserve boards – whoever is left. You don’t have to rack your brains. In marked contrast, the trainers of the Russian team have roughly ten players, from whom it is possible to form two teams of equal strength. About three months before the start of the tournament the trainers and the captain begin considering – who to invite on this occasion? Is it not time, for example, to blood one of the young players – such as Artemiev or Fedoseev? Or should hopes be pinned on the time-honoured ‘old men’ – Kramnik, Svidler and Grischuk? And what overall strategy should be followed – like that of Brazil (you score if you can, but we will score as many as we want), or like that of Germany (if we don’t concede, one of ours will surely score)? All of these questions are the subject of endless discussions, which rarely lead to an unequivocal result. On one occasion the trainers Alexander Motylev and Vladimir Potkin and I wrote down on three pieces of paper our dream team – and each wrote down a different team from the others. Of the five names, at best three coincided.

However, sooner or later you decide on your choice – and move on to the next question. On what boards to arrange these geniuses? You have five players of roughly equal strength, who must: 1. not be offended, 2. not be at loggerheads with one another, 3. be placed correctly, so that during the tournament they are able to display their best qualities.

After you have somehow coped with this task, it only remains for you to maintain the players’ interest in life and wait to see how it all ends. You can no longer have any significant influence on the process. You would say that this is not the most difficult job in the world? Then in response I will quote you Piglet: ‘And I know it seems easy (doing the tiddley-poms), but it is not every one who could do it.’

Especially since as captain of the Russian team you must – at least partly – be a Piglet. That is, be a cheerful companion who is always ready to go for a walk, drink a lot of tea (with honey and chocolates), and ask stupid questions to improve your companion’s mood. Since psychologically the majority of players are not Winnie-the-Pooh, but rather Eeyore, it is extremely important to ensure that they do not become depressed when they lose their tail half a point.

I am not going to describe match by match, the entire progress of our team in Reykjavik. As a mathematician would say, in general terms it can be described as follows: at moment X the match was not going

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easily, but after grandmaster Y displayed his best qualities, the problem was solved. The role of grandmaster Y, who solved the problem, was played successively by each player in our team. Therefore I will immediately turn to a description of the individuals, especially since chess is after all not played by teams, but by people.

And so, Board 1. Even during the World Cup in Baku the trainers and I were pleased that we had invited Svidler to the team before it started. We somehow felt that he was running into form. For one given to reflection, it is extremely important for Peter to believe in his own strength. Reaching the final of the World Cup gave him a huge supply of this vitamin, and this was immediately felt by his opponents. Peter did not lose a single game in Reykjavik and he won two – including the most important from the standpoint of the tournament battle, against Ivanchuk (and a very pretty one). In the last two rounds, when the overall objective was almost solved, we asked him to play as safely as possible, which he did – neither Aronian nor Leko had any chance to initiate play.

NEW IN CHESS

For the first time since 1972 chess returned to the Laugardalshöll, the venu of the Fischer-Spassky match. On the stage the players could admire the original table from the match.

Peter is a member of the Russian intelligentsia in the highest sense of the word. Chess and human erudition are combined in him with a constant readiness for reflection and introspection. Recently he has become mentally tougher, which has positively affected his results. After all, a great player should not be too nice a person! The respect in which he is held by the younger members of the team is combined in an amusing way with a constant desire to bite the leader on the heel. This entertainment, typical of a wolf pack, provides a mass of pleasure, but is not without its dangers: Peter has a brilliant wit and I would not advise anyone to try and get the better of him with words. You may be licking your wounds for a long time.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

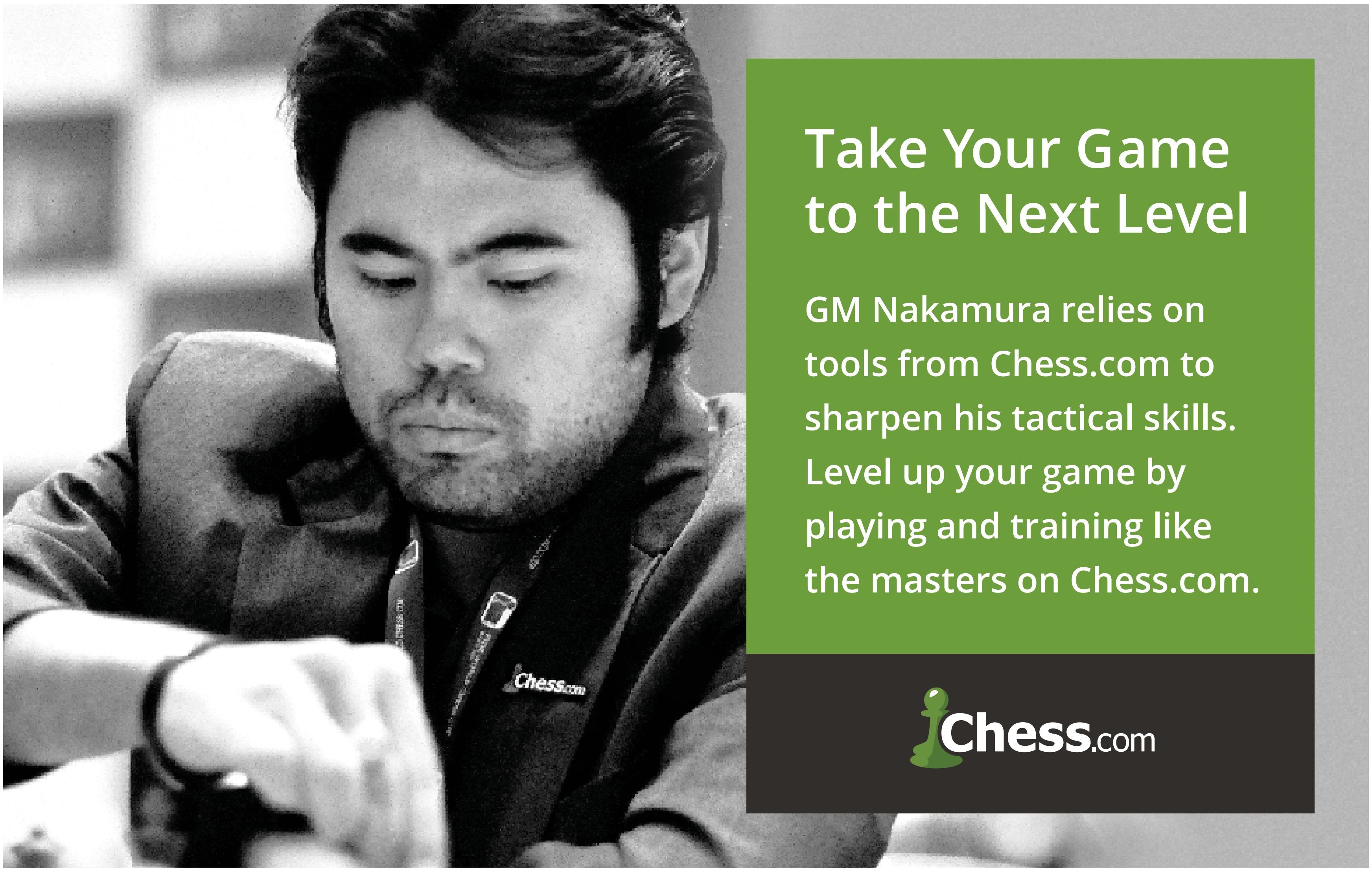
Captain Mark Glukhovsky proudly lifts the cup, surrounded by Peter Svidler, Ian Nepomniachtchi, Evgeny Tomashevsky, Vladimir Potkin (trainer) and Alexander Grischuk.

Playing on Board 2 was Alexander Grischuk – the only member of the team who lost some rating (–3.4 points). Grischuk has played for the Russian team since the age of 16. He, like Svidler, remembers the times when the Olympiads were won one after the other. In his youth Alexander read that Tigran Petrosian held a distinctive record – he had eight Olympiad gold medals. Grischuk quickly reckoned that at the age of 34 he would break the 9th World Champion's record. Since then the Russian men's team has not once won the Olympiad, but Alexander has continued to play, as he considers it his duty. He and I have quite different ideas about such a complex subject as patriotism. But on one thing we agree – Alexander should play for the national team if he has the opportunity. Even when he is off-form, Grischuk gives 100 per cent at the board, and his unique perspective on chess and his fantastic understanding of the game are extremely useful – not only for him, but also for the other players. He generously shares his ideas if he sees that they can help the team.

In Iceland, Alexander was unwell for much of the time – alas, this is a customary condition for him in a tournament. Only physical condition can explain why he did not bring a huge advantage to its logical conclusion in his game with Pavel Eljanov, but his profound understanding of the Berlin endgame told in the crucial match against France, when he beat Fressinet. Alexander himself did not regard this game as an achievement – he missed a tactical blow by his opponent. However, he handled himself so well in time-trouble that many did not understand whether he had blundered on e6 or sacrificed. This is chess of the highest class!

In chess circles the Russian champion Evgeny Tomashevsky (Board 3) is nicknamed 'professor'. There are several reasons for this. These are his appearance (cap, jacket, glasses), his coherent, rational speech, his great erudition, his higher education, and his inclination towards intellectual forms of leisure. All of this, however, would be of no value if Evgeny did not work endlessly on chess. His academic attitude to the game came from his teacher Yuri Razuvaev, and was developed during the time of his joint work with Boris Gelfand. In style he is a descendant of Botvinnik; playing with Tomashevsky, especially with Black, you feel that a steamroller is moving inexorably towards you. To discuss with him a game that has just been played is an enormous pleasure – he never brushes things aside or says anything superficial. On the contrary, he explains in detail the plans of the sides, and will tell you about both his and the other player's mistakes. Evgeny won both his games with White. He would have won more, but in the rest of the games he had to play Black. Evgeny is constantly progressing, and yet it is impossible to believe that only two years ago this grandmaster was not always included in the Russian team.

On Board 4 was Ian Nepomniachtchi. After Ian become Russian Champion in 2010 I wrote about him in some detail in New In Chess. Several years have passed, but Ian, it would appear, has not especially changed. Yes, he has matured, and he has become one of the best players in the world at rapid and blitz chess, and he has begun to follow fashion. He has improved his English and at times his gait resembles that of Carlsen. However, he simply cannot break into the world elite, and an explanation for this should be sought only and exclusively in the field of psychology. From the chess point of view he is a very dangerous opponent for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any player. At the championship in Iceland he once again demonstrated that he can play significantly better than his current rating. However, we also knew this before the start of the tournament.

As Grischuk says, it is possible to win against Ian, but it is not possible to enjoy a game with him. This is a very acute observation. Ian uses all legal means to try and demonstrate his superiority over his opponent. He is cunning, he is excellently prepared in the opening, and he takes difficult decisions extremely quickly. He hardly ever blunders. In contrast to Grischuk, he is not focused on finding the best move in a position, but you can be sure that he will choose the most unpleasant continuation for you. It appears that while you have calculated the position three moves ahead, he has calculated ten. Sometimes this impression is deceptive, but chess is played by people, not machines. And such chess demands a huge expenditure of energy. The most difficult thing in a game with Ian is to emerge from your first time-trouble (it will happen, don't doubt it!) with a position that is not hopeless. If this happens, take your chance before the second time-trouble. At this point Ian may rush and make a mistake, even if he has an extra hour on the clock. But if he stops to think properly and presents you with new problems, you will be unable to avoid a second, final time-trouble. 'The patient was sweating before he died?' 'Yes, he was sweating!'

For the team Ian played very responsibly. Twice he made mistakes – but he did this only in the won matches with Greece and Georgia. But at the same time, in key matches with Spain, Ukraine and Armenia, he was extremely mobilized and with his wins he produced the desired result.

On the fifth board you could observe Dmitry Jakovenko. Just a minute, wasn't it he who finished third in the FIDE Grand Prix, behind Caruana and Nakamura? Yes, that's him. Dmitry is an extremely strong player, but someone has to insure the team against defeat. Incidentally, this is not at all an easy task. It is not clear which is easier – not to lose on board one, or win at all costs on board four. On the bottom board player there is an additional moral responsibility, with which Jakovenko coped brilliantly. He confidently took first place among the reserves and not once in the tournament did he cause his team mates any anxiety – and this is very valuable.

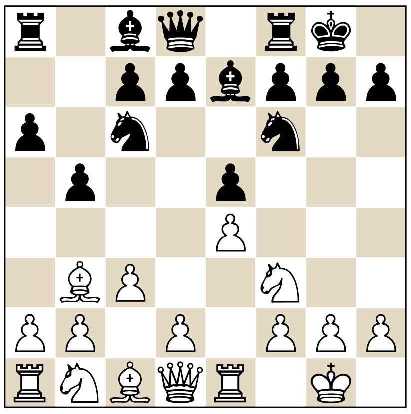
By education Dmitry is a mathematician, he likes intellectual games, he knows how to calculate variations, and he hates mistakes. I tried to persuade him to annotate a game, but he was unable to do this. 'Don't you understand, I didn't take the pawn!' He didn't blunder the pawn, please note, but 'didn't take' it, and in the game about which we were talking Mitya still confidently won. But he refused to annotate it – because he won insufficiently cleanly. Playing in the same team as such a person is a great pleasure. I would not wish anyone to have him as an enemy.

To conclude my tour of our team, I would like to express some words of gratitude to the trainers – Alexander Motylev and Vladimir Potkin. In all my life I have rarely met people so competent and friendly. While being strong players (both have won the European individual championship), they are happier helping others than playing themselves. In many respects it is they who make individuals into a team, i.e. a kind of community of people, for whom the overall aim for a time becomes more important than their private life. And what could be more pleasant than to walk together with such a team on the edge of a summer forest, holding a proudly inflated balloon and entertaining them and yourself with cheerful songs?

NOTES BY
Peter Svidler

RL 17.4 – C89
Vassily Ivanchuk
Peter Svidler
Reykjavik 2015 (4)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 0-0 8.c3

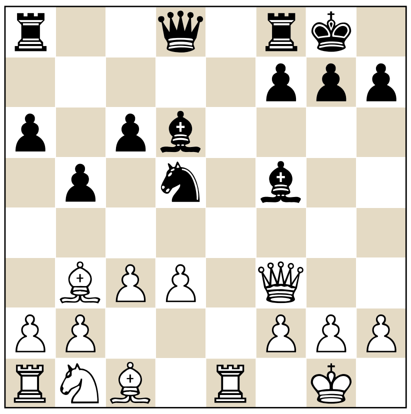


All this was blitzed out by both of us, but after 8.c3 I was faced with a choice. I've not been an active Marshall player of late, and tend to blink first in this position by playing 8...d6. Moreover, a mere month after Baku, 8...d5 would definitely come with a trigger warning. But since this was the only line I had kind of looked at before the game, I decided to go for it.

8...d5 9.exd5 ♘xd5 10.♘xe5 ♘xe5 11.♖xe5 c6 12.d3

12.d4 is very very rare these days.

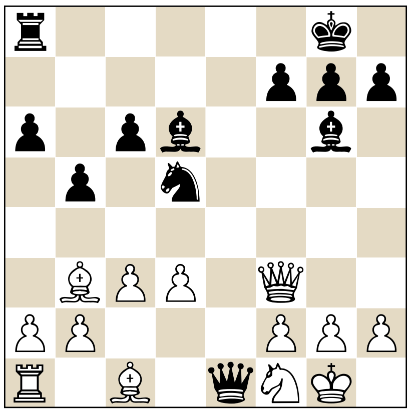
12...♗d6 13.♖e1 ♗f5 14.♕f3



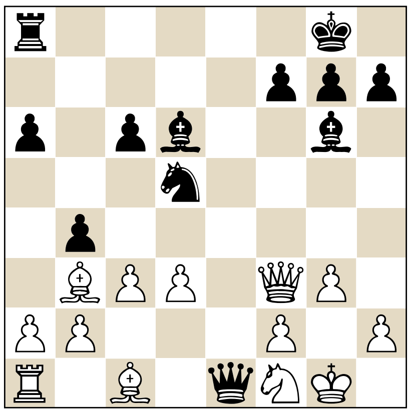
14...♖e8

14...♕h4 is probably safer, objectively speaking – but I wanted to try and exorcise the demons of that final tiebreak (against Karjakin in Baku in the World Cup final – ed.), if at all possible.

15.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 16.♘d2 ♕e1+ 17.♘f1 ♗g6 Still played reasonably quickly by both sides, but here Vassily began thinking in earnest, which gave me hope. I guess he completely discounted the probability of me repeating this line in a non-blitz game. Against a well-prepared opponent this is a very memory-dependent drawing attempt – which goes for the Marshall in general, of course – but if White has to work it all out over the board, things can get tricky.



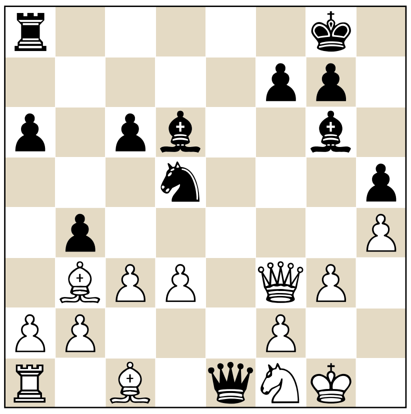
18.g3 The main line, entered after a 30-minute think. **18...b4**



19.h4?! But this move was played fast – and it's not a very good idea. White should probably still hold, but the inclusion of h4 and ...h5 favours Black in almost every line.

19.c4 ♘f6 20.♕xc6 is the starting point of a proper theoretical discussion. I've spent a whole night in Baku polishing those lines to perfection before Game 4, only for Sergey to play 1.♘f3.

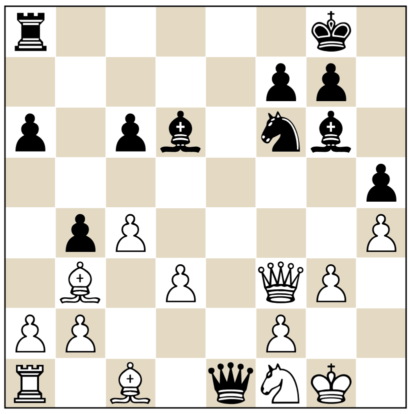
19...h5



Since 19.h4 was a brief side-note in my files, I took 20 minutes to make sure I was not missing anything important before playing 19... h5, and then went for a walk while Vassily went back to thinking.

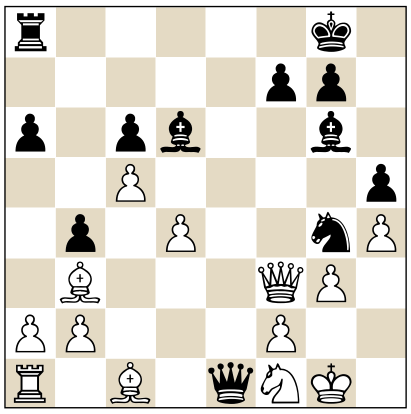
I started off by thinking White still has a comfortable draw with 20.♗xd5. But then it occurred to me that after 20.♗xd5, with the back rank safe, I am not forced after 20...cxd5 21.♕xd5 to play 21...♖d8, which does equalize easily, and can try for more: 21...♖e8!? (21...♖d8 22.♗g5 ♕xa1 23.♗xd8 bxc3 24.bxc3 ♕d1) 22.♕xd6 ♕d1!, creating all kinds of threats. The machine still holds this for White, but with just only moves: 23.♕d4! ♖e1 24.♗h6! ♖xf1+ 25.♔g2!, and Black has to give the perpetual 25...♖g1+ 26.♔h2 ♖h1+ 27.♔g2 ♖g1+.

20.c4 ♘f6



21.♗d1

This is a first step in the wrong direction. It's understandable that White wants to drive the queen away from e1 – but with the inclusion of ...b4 and c4, he will soon realize Black does not need pieces deep on enemy territory to create massive threats. It was better to play 21.d4! ♘g4 22.c5, and here it still seems equal: the machine's cleanest solution is the startling-looking



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

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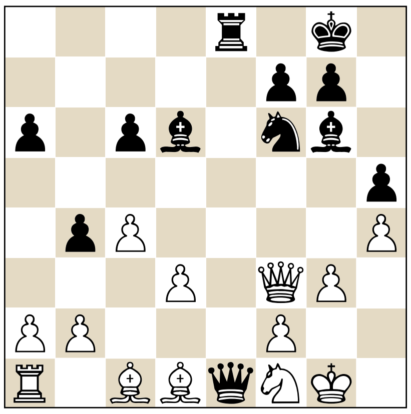
Peter Svidler was rewarded for the courage to try and exorcise the demons of the tiebreak he lost in the Baku World Cup final.

22...♗xc5! 23.dxc5 ♖e8. Here, Black is a full piece down, but White is so tied up that he has no way to exploit this. One possible line is 24.a3 bxa3 25.bxa3 ♖e2 26.♗f4 ♕xf2+ 27.♕xf2 ♘xf2 28.♔h2 ♘d3+ 29.♔g1 ♘f2, and it's a draw.

While 22...♗e7, which is what I was planning, 'with ...♗f6 to follow, and a great game for Black' – is in fact the prelude to some crazy geometrical ideas: 23.♗e3 ♕xa1 24.♕xc6 (hitting both a8 and g6) 24...♗d3! 25.♕xa8+ ♔h7 26.♕g2 f5, creating the threat of 27...♗e4 27.c6 ♗d6 28.♗d2 ♕xb2 29.♕d5 ♘f6!, and once again the magical 0.00 appears on the screen.

21...♖e8

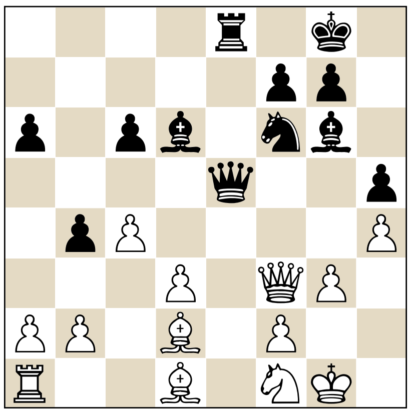


22.♗d2?

And this very natural move is probably the big mistake of the game.

White still had a chance to play 22.d4! – even here it was important to include that move. Black is fine after both 22...c5 and 22...♕e6 – but White is still very much alive.

22...♕e5



It becomes immediately obvious why leaving the pawn on d3 was wrong. The queenside is now weak – both b2 and d3 will be hanging from now on – and all of White's light pieces are horribly jumbled together, with no real prospects. Black is in complete control now.

23.♖c1

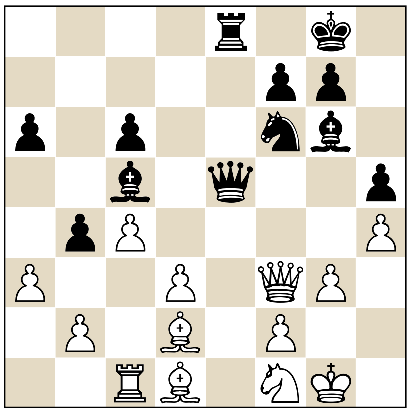
23.♖b1 ♗c5 is very unpleasant – note how the inclusion of 19.h4 h5 makes Black's threats on the kingside much more immediate, with ...♘g4 coming next. Vassily tries to offer some incentive for me to deviate from this very simple plan, but I saw no reason to.

23...♗c5

23...♕xb2 was quite good, but I felt I should be playing for more. Objectively, this gives White additional hope – but without computer assistance it is quite hard to believe 24.♕xc6 could hold. Neither of us did during the game.

24.a3?!

Here, I spent some time calculating the forced lines beginning with 24...♘g4, did not find the forced win I was looking for, and finally settled on a move I felt would be incredibly unpleasant for my opponent to face.



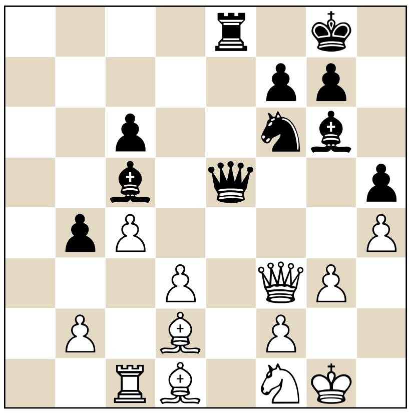
For better or worse, White had to play 24.♕xc6! ♗xd3 25.♗f3. I assumed something like 25...♖e6 (the machine suggests 25...♗xf1 26.♖xf1 ♕xg3+ 27.♗g2 ♗d4 28.♗g5 ♕b8, but if this is in fact the best play, then the position is not at all easy to solve from a human perspective) would win easily here, when in fact after 26.♕c8+! ♔h7 27.♖e1 ♕f5 28.♖xe6 it looks like Black should be winning by force, but he isn't – he is only slightly better after 28...fxe6 29.♗f4! ♗d4 30.♕d8 e5 31.♘e3 ♗xe3 32.♗xe3 ♗xc4.

24...a5

Reinforcing the feeling that White is tied up with nowhere to go.

But stronger was 24...♘g4! 25.axb4 ♗xf2+ 26.♔g2 ♗d4! (I underestimated this move. My main idea was to play 26...♕xb2, but the position after 27.♖c2 did not seem all that clear to me) 27.♖c2 ♕d6! was totally winning. Quietly Black regroups, and the threat of ...♘e5 decides. I saw a similar idea later in the game, but, sadly, not in this line.

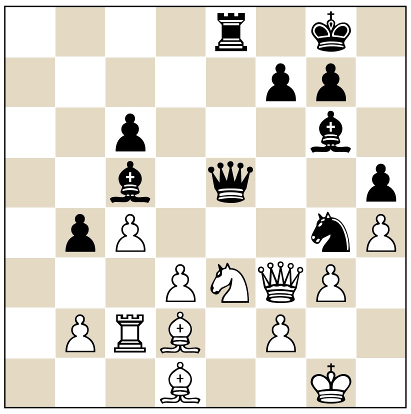
25.axb4 axb4



26.♖c2

This is bad, but, strangely enough, the exchange of the a-pawns seemingly makes White's position indefensible even after 26.♕xc6 ♗xd3 27.♗f3 ♖e6 28.♕c8+ ♔h7 29.♖e1 ♕f5 30.♖xe6, and now I would need to find 30...♗xf2+! 31.♔xf2 ♘g4+ 32.♔g2 ♗xf1+ 33.♔xf1 ♕xf3+ 34.♔e1 ♕xg3+ 35.♔d1 fxe6. The difference is that after 36.♕xe6 ♕f3+! White can resign – his king will be boxed in even on the queenside: 37.♔c1 b3!.

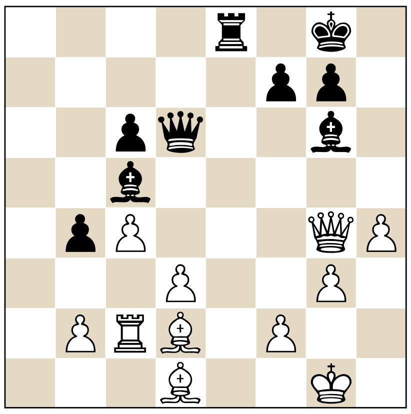
26...♘g4 27.♘e3



27...♕d6!

The last finesse. My initial idea was to play 27...♕d4 28.♕xc6 ♖xe3? (for the record – 28...♖e5 still wins here) 29.♗xe3 ♘xe3 'and mate' – but then I spotted 30.♕e8+ ♔h7 31.♕xe3. After the text-move White is completely helpless against the various threats.

28.♘xg4 hxg4 29.♕xg4



29...♗h5

One last nod in the direction of that fateful blitz game in Baku. I played a similar shot there, and in both cases

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it was not the best move in the position... However, here it does win, even though 29...♕xd3 is stronger mathematically speaking.

30.♕xh5 ♕xg3+ 31.♔h1 ♕xf2

White resigned. He will have to give up a lot of material in order not to get mated.

This was an important win. Ukraine is a powerhouse, and winning our match against them – quite decisively, too, since Ian completely outplayed Areschenko on the last board, and Grischuk was much better against Eljanov before opting to trade everything off to get us to 2½ – set us up for a great run in the tournament.

NOTES BY

Evgeny Tomashevsky

QO 15.7 – D52

Evgeny Tomashevsky

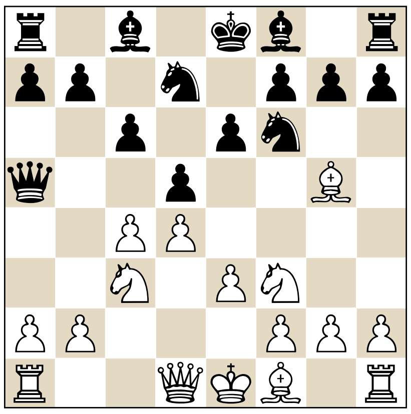
Alexander Ipatov

Reykjavik 2015 (1)

1.c4 c6

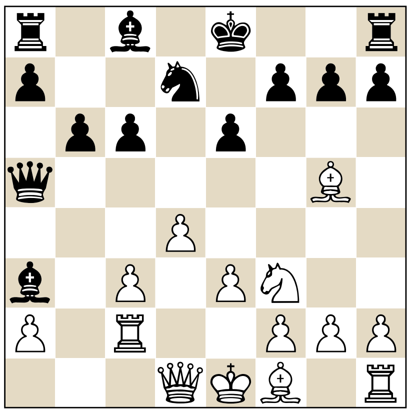
To some extent this move already came as a surprise to me: Sasha's opening repertoire is rather broad and quite well prepared, and it was not easy to predict the Slav Defence, which in recent times he has rarely employed.

2.♘f3 d5 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.♗g5 ♘bd7 6.e3 ♕a5



And as for the Cambridge Springs Variation, he had never employed it at all! It is a sensible idea – to surprise the opponent with a recently prepared system, which also has a good reputation, but Alexander was a little unlucky: I had not only devoted much time to the resulting complicated strategic positions after a game with the 'guru' of the variation – Alexey Dreev (Loo 2014), but I had also made a cursory repetition of the main branches of this analysis before one of my games from the European Club Cup in October.

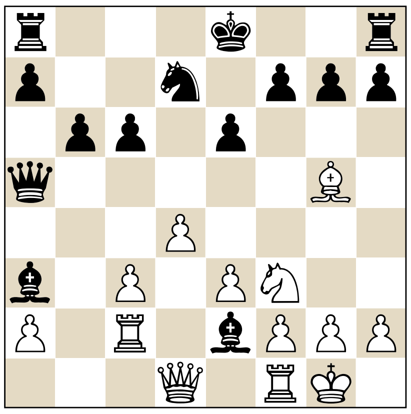
7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.♖c1 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 ♗a3 10.♖c2 b6



At the present moment this is probably the main branch of the entire variation, introduced in 2011 by Bart Michiels and 'circulated' by the future World Champion (Gelfand-Carlsen, London 2013).

11.♗e2 There are also plenty of subtleties after the bishop's development on d3, but at the present moment theory and practice 'vote' for this more modest square.

11...♗a6 12.0-0 ♗xe2



13.♖xe2!?

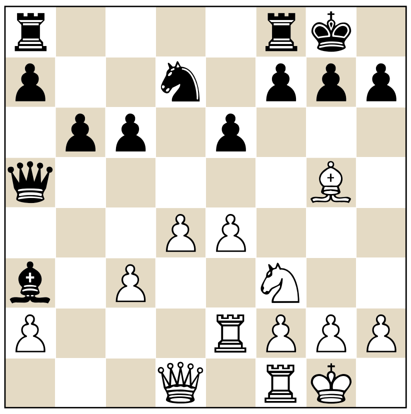
A principled novelty, associated with a new approach to the content of the position. Before this game everyone captured on e2 with the queen (what could be more natural?). After 'deserting' to the white side Magnus even won a brilliant game against Shakhriyar Mamedyarov (Shamkir 2014), but in May last year I was unable to find anything convincing for White.

Speculative conclusions led to the following logical chain: Black has strategic advantages on the queenside and in the endgame, which suggests that he should seek counterplay involving attacks on the centre and exchanges; White dominates in the centre, which he would like to use for play against the opponent's king; capturing on e2 with the queen leaves the rook on the c-file, which will probably soon be opened, which favours exchanges and does not assist the attack. Of course, a concrete verification revealed that there were also 'pitfalls' after ♖xe2, but on the whole it convinced me of the practical suitability of the idea...

13...0-0

13...♕xc3?! is premature in view of 14.♖c2 ♕a5 15.♖xc6 0-0 16.♖c7.

14.e4



14...♖fe8!? At the first critical moment Sasha responded quickly and quite well, by choosing a flexible continuation, for the moment not disclosing all Black's cards.

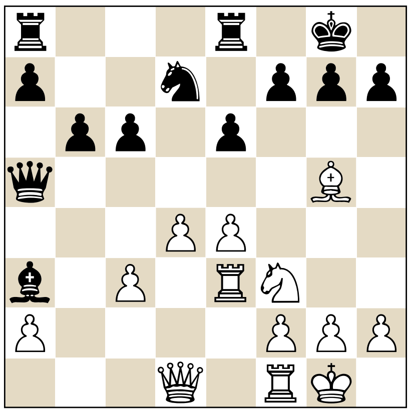
The most natural and principled is undoubtedly 14...♕xc3, after which White has an interesting choice mainly between 15.e5!? and 15.♖e3!? ♕a5 16.♕d3, with mind-boggling play in both cases, in which for a long time even the computer frequently 'gets confused'.

Another approach to the position

is 14...e5, removing the opponent's most obvious attacking motifs. However, more often in this variation Black aims for ...c6-c5, and after the advance of the e-pawn and, say, 15.♕c2 ♖fe8 16.♖d1, White can claim some advantage.

15.♖e3

This move took me quite a long time. The point is that I roughly remembered the variations from my home analysis, arising after 15.e5 ♕xc3, when the capture of the pawn is one of the best replies, and in this situation I preferred to make use of an additional possibility.



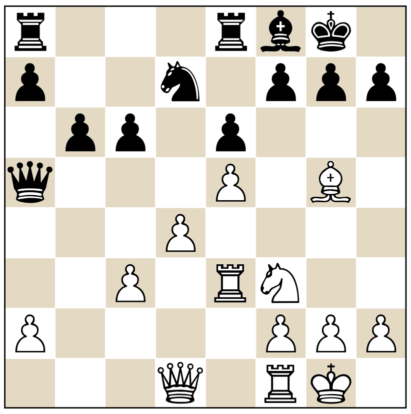
15...♗f8

I spent a long time analysing the resulting type of position at home, I tested it at the board with full intensity and concentration, and all the same very many of my assessments during play and immediately after the game were, apparently, far from correct. Thus I considered the bishop manoeuvre to f8 to be dubious, and I assumed that the best and almost obligatory move was 15...e5!?, which is indeed sound and quite good, with the approximate continuation 16.♕c2 ♗e7 17.♗xe7 ♖xe7 18.♖d1 ♖ae8 19.g3 and slight pressure for White, thinking that the move in the game would allow me a fearsome attack.

For some reason 15...♗e7! also seemed risky, on account of e4-e5 immediately or after the capture, which, to put it mildly, is questionable, for example: 16.♗xe7 ♖xe7 17.e5 ♕xa2, and if 18.♘g5 the reply 18...f6 19.exf6 ♘xf6 suggests itself, after which White has to concern himself with gaining sufficient compensation! Thus, if Sasha had retreated his bishop slightly less expansively, I would have had to relate differently to 15.♖e3...

16.e5!

During the game I felt extremely optimistic, considering for Black almost that variation which in fact occurred! Possibly I was able to 'infect' my opponent with this confidence...

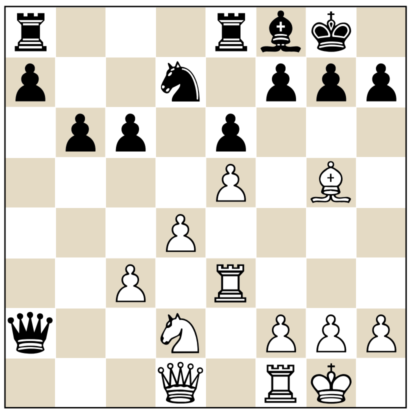


16...♕xa2?!

It is only after this loss of time, not justified by the slight material gain, that White's game genuinely becomes easy. It was essential to begin immediate counterplay in the centre with 16...c5!, which in addition justifies the retreat of the bishop from a3.

17.♘d2

Now Black cannot comfortably eliminate the wedge on e5, thanks to which his opponent obtains a great superiority in force on the kingside.



17...c5?

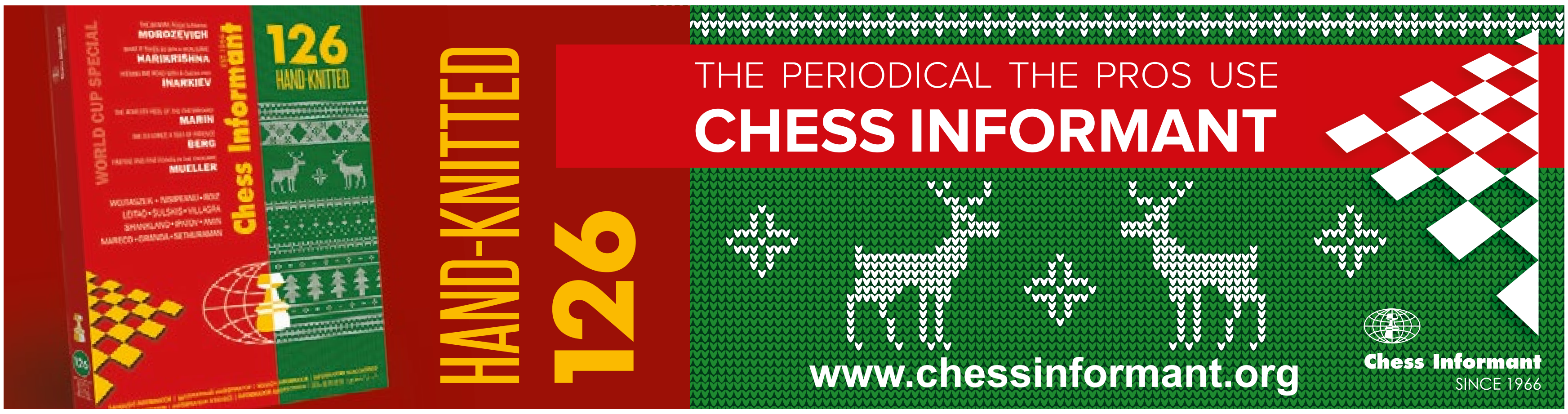
Too late! For the defence of the king it was now time to adopt resolute measures: 17...f6 18.exf6 gxf6 or 17...f5 18.exf6 gxf6 with the continuation 19.♗h4 ♗g7 20.♘e4 ♖e7 21.♕g4, when White has a strong initiative for the pawn, but the defensive possibilities are not yet exhausted.

18.♘e4

Four white pieces are attacking the king, whose residence the main defenders are unable to reach. The assessment of the position is undisputed. However, in the game numerous further events occurred...

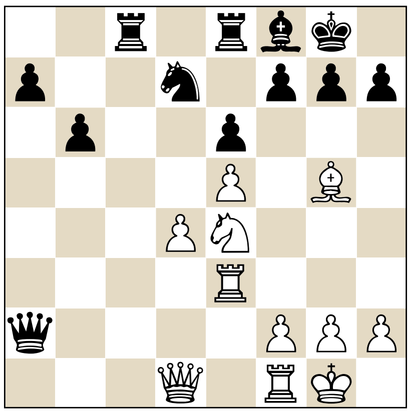
18...cxd4 19.cxd4 ♖ac8

Little is changed by 19...♖ec8 20.♖h3 g6 21.♕g4 ♕d5 22.♕f4 with a decisive attack.

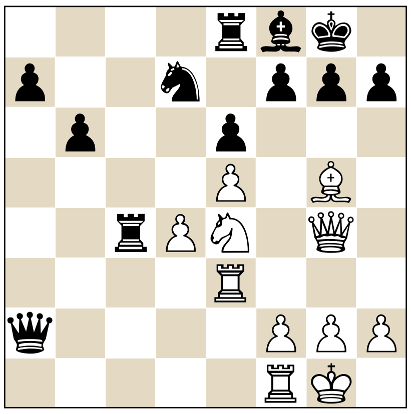


MARIA EMELIANOVA

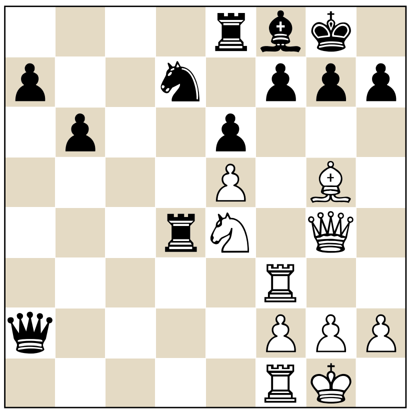
Russian champion Evgeny Tomashevsky won both his games as White. According to his captain he could have won more, 'but in the rest of the games he had to play Black'.



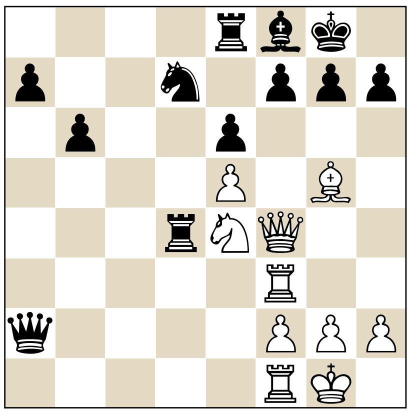
20.♕g4?
At this point I still had more than half an hour on the clock, but I rushed. 20.♖h3! wins quickly and without any questions: 20...♕c2 21.♕g4, and Black is absolutely helpless against the threat of 22.♕h4 h6 23.♗xh6!.
20...♖c4!
Sasha exploits his opportunity! 'Thanks' to White's mistake the remaining part of the game became quite interesting.



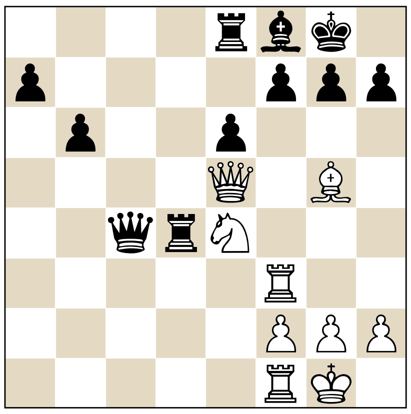
21.♖f3?!
As with Alexander on the 16th and 17th moves, 'mistakes do not occur singly'!
In the variation 21.♗f6 ♖xd4 22.♗xg7, I missed the brilliant defence 22...♖xe4!!, after which White has to force a draw by 23.♕g5 ♗xg7 24.♖g3 ♔f8 25.♕xg7+ ♔e7 26.♕g5+ ♔f8.
And the variation 21.♖h3! ♖xd4 22.♕h5 h6 23.♗xh6! g6 24.♕h4 ♖xe4 25.♗f4! ♗g7 26.♕h7+ ♔f8 27.♗h6! ♔e7 28.♕xg7 ♖xe5 29.♖f3! ♖f8 30.♕h7!, when White's advantage is close to decisive, is not so easy to calculate correctly in the tense atmosphere of a team match.
21...♖xd4



22.♕f4! Of course, weak was 22.♘f6+? ♘xf6 23.♕xd4 ♘d5, when the advantage passes to Black.



Now I was very pleased with myself: it appeared that the fine strategic plan of restricting the black pieces and creating a paradoxical weakness on f7 had been implemented very 'stylishly', and all the variations were 'knitting together' in my favour.
22...♖b8? The final mistake. Other rook moves or 22...♔h8 also do not save Black, but 22...♘xe5! suggests itself, with a complicated justification in the form of 23.♕xe5 ♕c4!!.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

In my view it is such 'geometrical' moves that are especially difficult for humans to find, and they emphasize the difference between us and computers: 24.♖e1 (bad now is 24.♘f6+? gxf6 25.♕xf6 e5, when Black has the key resource ...♖g4!) 24...f5 25.♘d2 (25.♘g3!? ♗d6 26.♕e2 retains

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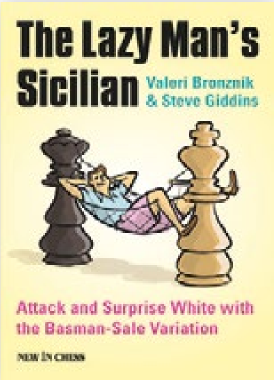
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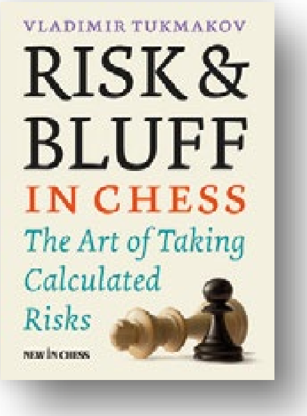
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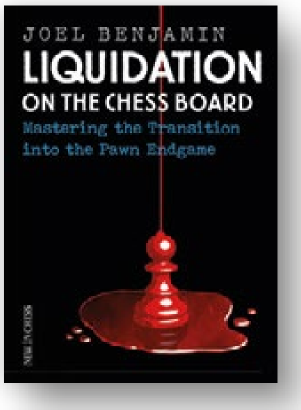
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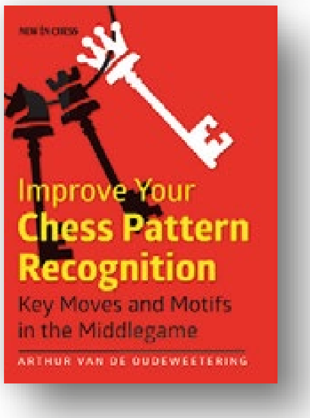
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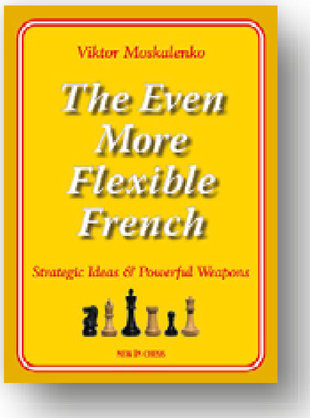
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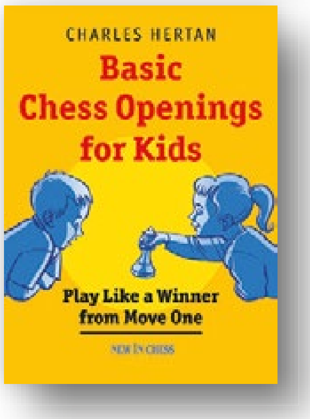
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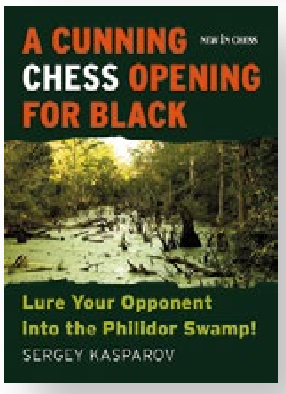
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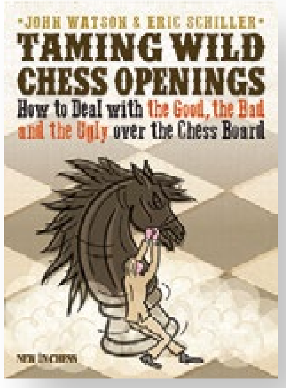
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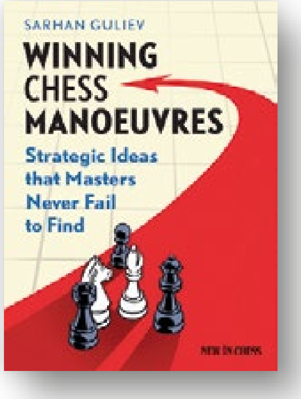
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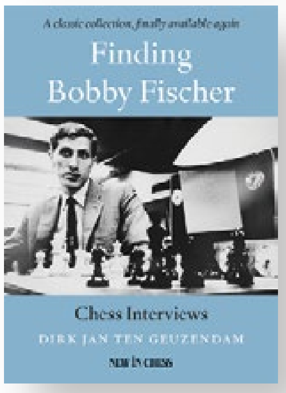
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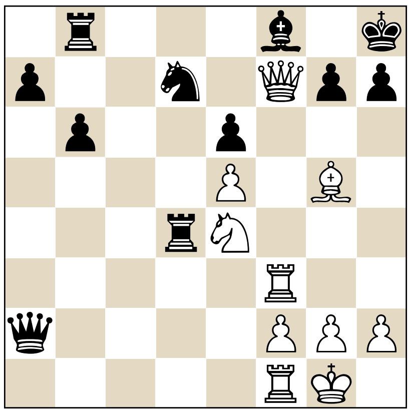
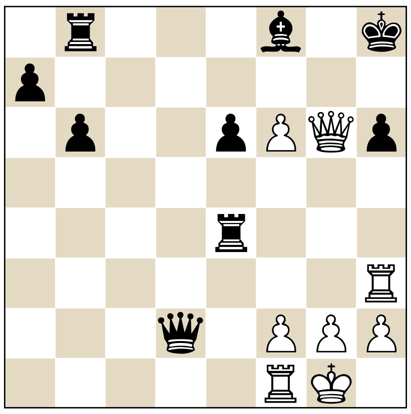
more fighting resources) 25...♕d5 26.♖xf5 ♕d7!, and Black not so much gains saving chances, but is simply close to equality! An amazing turn of events.

23.♕xf7+ ♔h8



24.♗f6! It was for calculating this natural winning move (aesthetic and quite straightforward) that the reserve of time, gained by quickly performing 20.♕g4?!, came in useful ☺.

24...♖xe4 25.♖g3 ♘xf6 26.exf6 g6 27.♖h3 h6 28.♕xg6 ♕d2



29.♕xe4 Initially after the game I seriously cursed myself for this 'blot on the canvas', but later it transpired that other decisions deserved to be criticized ☺. And in slight time-trouble I remembered a piece of wisdom, ascribed either to Lasker or to Capablanca: 'If you have a choice between mate and the capture of a rook, take the rook – there may not be a mate'...

However, after the obvious 29.♖g3 there was a mate, and the capture on f2 with the queen could merely have deferred it by a few moves and for an instant embarrassed White.

29...♖c8 30.♖d3 ♕c2 31.♕xe6 ♕c6 32.♕g4 ♖c7 33.♕g6 ♕e6 34.♖d8 And Alexander resigned.

NOTES BY

Levon Aronian

RL 7.2 – C65
Magnus Carlsen
Levon Aronian
Reykjavik 2015 (3)

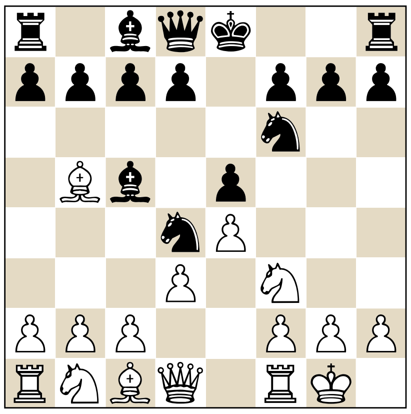
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6

Usually I play 3...a6 against players who themselves play the Berlin with Black, but in recent times I have been trying to be less predictable.

4.d3 ♗c5 5.0-0

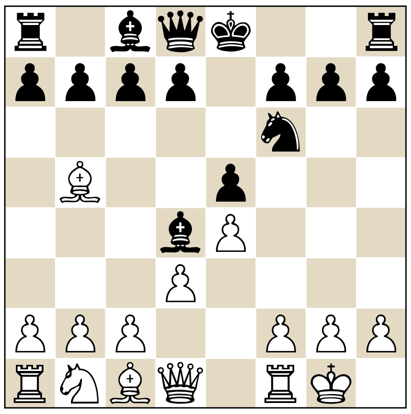
This variation is justifiably popular. White wants to force Black to play ...d6 or choose a seemingly dubious set-up.

5...♘d4



With this move Black goes in for a highly concrete variation, involving the idea of rapidly seizing the centre with ...c6 and ...d5. In the event of inaccurate play there is the danger of allowing White to begin an attack on the kingside with f4.

6.♘xd4 ♗xd4



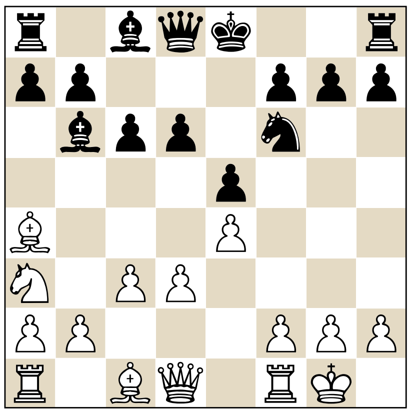
7.c3 If 7.♘d2, Black has an excellent reply in the form of 7...0-0 8.♘f3 ♗b6. After 9.♘xe5 d5 Black regains the pawn in the centre and equalizes.

7...♗b6 8.♘a3

With ♘a3 White retains the possibility of playing ♗g5. Of the elite players, this move has already been taken up by Topalov and Karjakin.

8...c6 9.♗a4 d6

For the moment Black cannot comfortably play ...d5, since after 9...d5 10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♘c4 he has no convenient way of defending the e5-pawn. With the move in the game Black develops and waits.



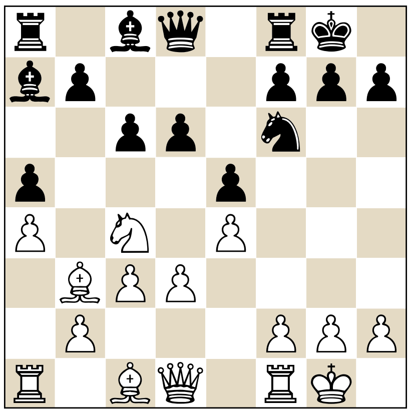
10.♗b3 For some inexplicable reason, before the game this move seemed to me to be inaccurate and most of my analysis began with the inclusion of the moves 10.♘c4 ♗c7. With the move in the game White tries to transpose into similar positions, but not allow Black to freely post his bishop on e6. It should be mentioned that until Black castles kingside there is no point in White playing 10.♗g5, since the standard 10...h6 11.♗h4 g5 12.♗g3 h5 gives Black a dangerous attack on the kingside.

10...a5 This is the whole point, I thought. 'Surely now with the bishop on a7 you will have an excellent game', my inner voice said to me. Instead of 10...a5, Black can of course play 10...♗e6, but here psychology interferes. In this case White will fully justify his move 10.♗b3, by slightly weakening Black's position and giving him doubled pawns after 11.♗xe6.

11.♘c4 ♗a7

The favourite player of 'Ponch', a mutual friend of Magnus and me – Fabiano Caruana – played 11...♗c7 here. To me, my move seems more active.

12.a4 0-0 It was also possible to play rather more modestly with 12...h6, but modesty has never been my distinguishing trait.



13.♗g5 The critical reply. After 13.h3 h6 14.♗e3 ♗e6 the game is equal.

13...h6

13...♗e6 does not lead to particular difficulties for Black, and it is possible that a maestro who is less skilled in active play would have chosen it.

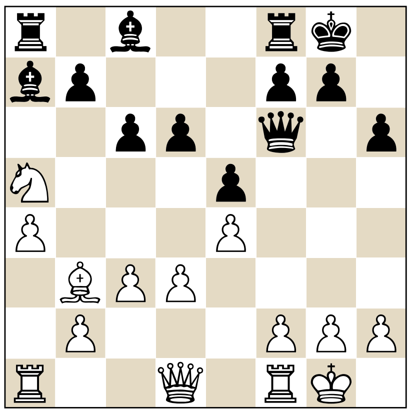
> ‘It was also possible to play rather more modestly with 12...h6, but modesty has never been my distinguishing trait.’

14.♗xf6

And so, the challenge is accepted. After 14.♗h4 g5 15.♗g3 ♗g4, followed by ...♘h5, although Black has a comfortable position, there are many opportunities for mistakes by both sides.

14.♗h4 would have been played by most elite players, but Magnus Carlsen is a champion who likes and is able to defend.

14...♕xf6 15.♘xa5



15...d5 Without this move the pawn sacrifice has no great sense. The point is that after 16.exd5 cxd5 17.♗xd5 ♕d8 18.♗xb7 ♗xb7 19.♘xb7 ♕c7, Black traps the knight on b7 and has good chances of winning, since the white pawns will not quickly become strong.

I will not hide the fact that at this moment I was very pleased with myself, a fact noticed by the Dutch wunderkind Anish Giri, who came up to our board and approvingly nodded to me.

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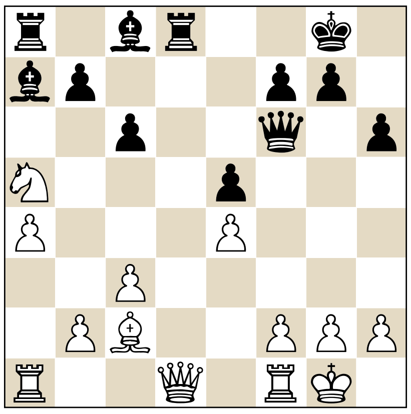
16.♗c2 This move, made instantly by Magnus, staggered me. I thought that White could not allow the opening of the d-file, but it turns out to be not so terrible.

After the more cowardly 16.exd5 cxd5 17.♗c2, Black has a promising position. I thought that 17...♕d6 with the idea of ...f5 was interesting, as well as the extravagant 17...b6 18.♘b3 ♗a6, with similar attacking ideas.

16...dxe4 17.dxe4

White could have played for equality with 17.♘c4, but this is not in the spirit of his preceding play.

17...♖d8



18.♕e1

We both thought that this was the only move, but White has available a very strong resource in the form of the move 18.♗d3. Now the seemingly winning 18...♕d6 is not so good, on account of 19.♕f3, when after the erroneous 19...♕xd3 20.♖ad1 White wins. I suspect that I would have chosen 18...♗e6 19.♕c2 ♕g5 followed by the doubling of rooks on the d-file. In this case Black has full compensation for the pawn, but also White has no reason to worry.

It should be mentioned that in this position White has two other more or less sensible moves, but analysis shows that they both are bad. For example, 18.♕e2 ♕g5 forces White to play 19.♕f3 and after 19...♗g4 20.♕g3 ♕h5 Black has the strong threat of ...♖d6 and ...♖g6, which gives him the advantage. And after 18.♕f3 ♕xf3 19.gxf3 ♖d2 20.♖ac1 ♗e6 White has no acceptable way of evicting the rook from d2.

NEW IN CHESS

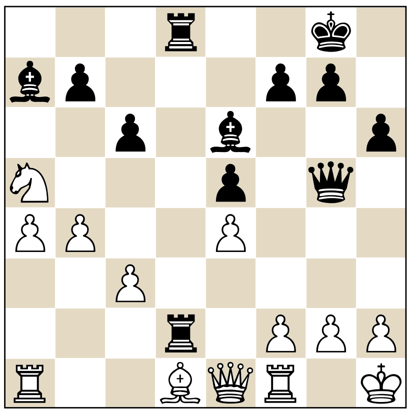
Levon Aronian's win against World Champion Magnus Carlsen can only boost the Armenian's growing self-confidence.

18...♕g5 The following moves are practically forced and do not require any particular explanation.

19.♔h1 ♖d2 20.♗d1 ♗e6 Black has no right to allow the knight to go to c4.

21.b4 ♖ad8

After 21...♗b6 White succeeds in relieving the situation with 22.♗b3 and in achieving equality.



22.♘xb7

The decisive mistake, which was probably caused by a tactical oversight in one of the variations and my opponent's lack of time for thought.

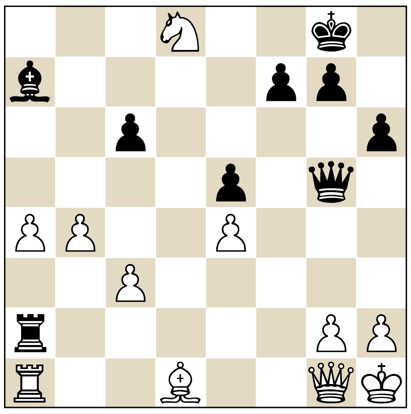
22.♗b3 would have led to an equally difficult ending after 22...♗h3 23.gxh3 ♕f4 24.♘c4 ♖8d3 25.♕xd2 ♖xd2 26.♘xd2 ♕xd2, but White had a solution in the form of the seemingly ultra-passive move 22.♗e2. Strangely enough, Black has nothing special. White exchanges rooks with ♖d1 and combines this idea with the exchange of the light-squared bishops, maintaining equality.

Usually a move such as 22.♗e2 is rejected by a player for being excessively slow, but once you believe in it you begin to find many latent virtues in it.

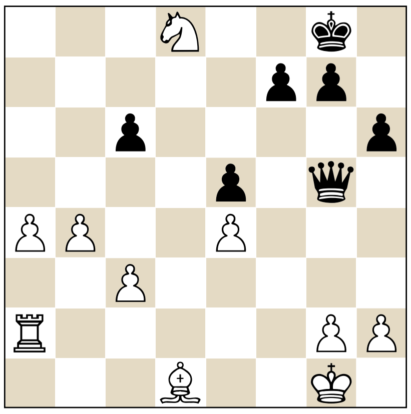
22...♗c4 Of course. A possibility of approaching the white king is something that normally I do not miss.

23.♘xd8 As also earlier in the game there follows a series of only moves.

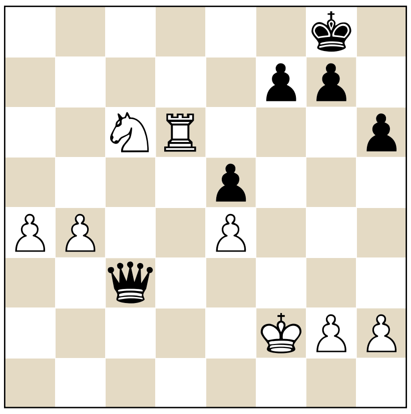
23...♗xf1 24.♕xf1 ♖xf2 25.♕g1 ♖a2



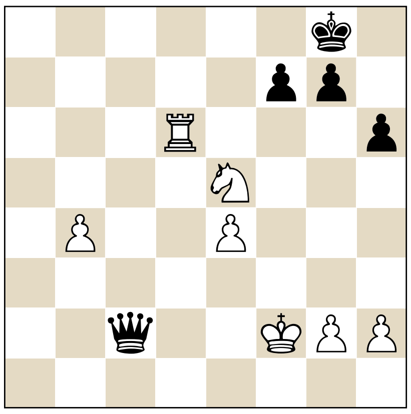
26.♖xa2
It should be mentioned that 26.♗b3 is elegantly refuted by 26...♕xg2+ 27.♕xg2 ♖xa1+ 28.♕f1 ♖xf1+ 29.♔g2 ♖g1+ and 30...♖c1, winning the important c3-pawn and the game.
26...♗xg1 27.♔xg1



27...♕c1
An important nuance. It is not so easy to win after 27...♕xd8 28.♗e2. After the a-pawn begins advancing it will be restrained by the black queen.
28.♔f2 ♕xd1 28...♕xc3 was also possible, but I was chasing the bishop.
29.♘xc6 ♕b3 30.♖d2 After 30.♖e2 ♕xc3 31.b5 ♔h7, because of the exposed position of his king, White cannot hold his a- and b-pawns.
30...♕xc3 31.♖d6



White's dream is to exchange his a-, b- and e-pawns for the black e-pawn and try to erect something resembling a fortress, but this is possible only with active cooperation on the part of Black.
31...♕b2+ 32.♔e3 ♕a3+
When you see a win, it is better not to be diverted by bonus points (g2).
33.♔f2 If 33.♖d3 Black has 33...♕c1+. **33...♕xa4** A crafty and pretty way of speeding the conversion. **34.♘xe5 ♕c2+** Now White loses the important g2-pawn.

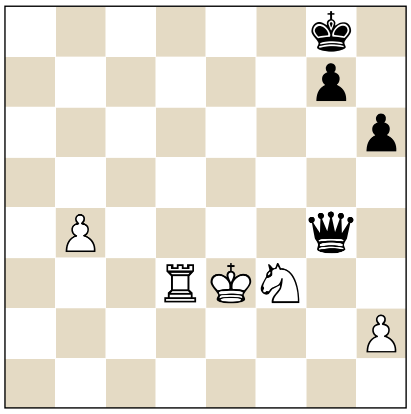


Reykjavik 2015

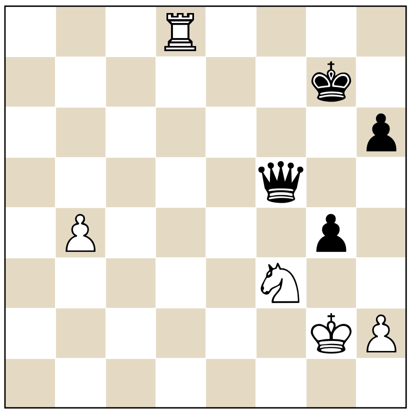
		+	–	=	MP	
1	Russia	6	0	3	15	224.5
2	Armenia	5	1	3	13	220.5
3	Hungary	5	1	3	13	217.0
4	France	5	1	3	13	211.5
5	Ukraine	6	3	0	12	185.0
6	Germany	5	2	2	12	168.5
7	Azerbaijan	4	2	3	11	182.5
8	Spain	5	3	1	11	180.5
9	Georgia	4	2	3	11	180.5
10	England	4	2	3	11	165.5
11	Netherlands	5	3	1	11	163.5
12	Czech Republic	4	2	3	11	160.0
13	Poland	4	3	2	10	165.0
14	Moldova	4	3	2	10	162.5
15	Italy	4	3	2	10	161.5
16	Serbia	3	3	3	9	161.0
17	Turkey	4	4	1	9	134.0
18	Latvia	4	4	1	9	128.0
19	Iceland	4	4	1	9	125.5
20	Slovenia	4	4	1	9	120.0
21	Norway	4	5	0	8	154.5
22	Romania	3	4	2	8	136.0
23	Croatia	3	4	2	8	130.5
24	Greece	3	4	2	8	121.5
25	Finland	4	5	0	8	112.0
26	Lithuania	3	4	2	8	108.0
27	Montenegro	2	4	3	7	139.0
28	Sweden	3	5	1	7	122.0
29	Switzerland	3	5	1	7	112.0
30	Austria	3	5	1	7	96.5
31	Denmark	3	5	1	7	91.5
32	Iceland Legends	3	5	1	7	91.0
33	Belgium	2	6	1	5	86.0
34	Faroe Islands	2	6	1	5	59.5
35	Scotland	1	7	1	3	19.5
36	Kosovo	1	8	0	2	62.5

36 teams, 9 rounds

35.♔f3 After the retreat onto the back rank Black easily picks up the e5-knight with checks.
If 35.♔g3 there is the decisive 35...♕c7 36.♖d5 f6, winning the knight, while 35.♔e3 ♕xg2 36.♘f3 ♕b2 is equally hopeless, since after Black plays ...g5 at the required moment it is not clear how to defend against ...g4.
35...f5 36.♖d3 fxe4+ 37.♔xe4 ♕xg2+ 38.♘f3 ♕g4+ 39.♔e3



39...g5 The careless 39...♕xb4 would have led after 40.h4 to a position where Black still has to work a long time for a win, if of course it is still possible.
The move in the game wins easily, since also in other variations after the advance of the pawn to g4, White loses the connection between knight and rook, and like a hungry wolf the queen begins its sanguinary business.
40.♔f2 ♕f5 41.♖d8+ ♔g7 42.♔g2 g4



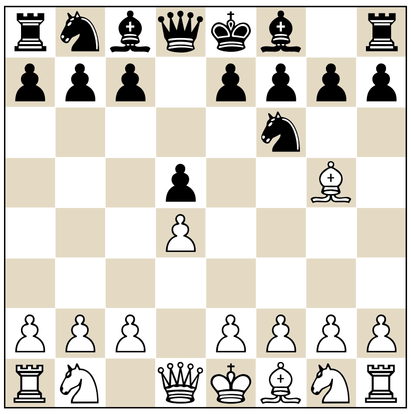
43.♘d2 After 43.♘d4 ♕e4+ 44.♔g1 ♔f7 45.b5 ♕e7, White loses his b-pawn, and after this everything else.
43...♕e6 44.♘f1 44.b5 would have prolonged the resistance by a couple of moves. **44...♕c6+** White loses his rook and so he resigned.

NOTES BY
Richard Rapport

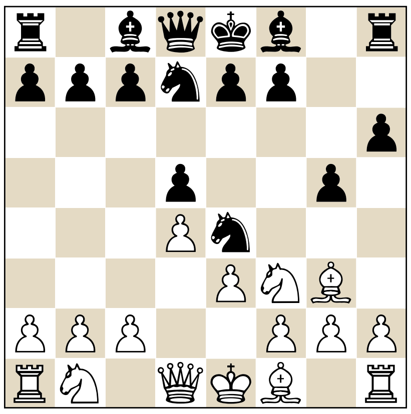
QP 7.9 – D01
Richard Rapport
Teimour Radjabov
Reykjavik 2015 (8)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♗g5 The match between Hungary and Azerbaijan was really important for my team (even though every match in the last couple of rounds was crucial), so I tried to avoid any theoretical conflict against my world-class opponent. I wasn't brave enough to enter the KID against such an expert as Radjabov.

2...d5



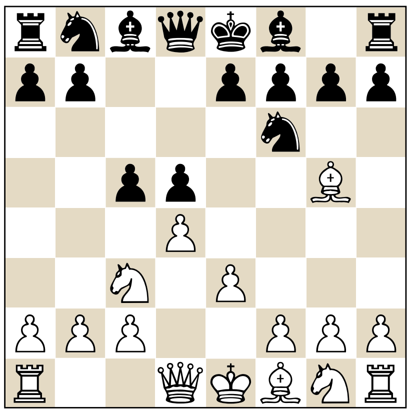
3.e3 The classical main line is 3.♗xf6, when 3...exf6 is the solid way to play. **3...c5** The main move. Strangely enough, this was the first time I faced it after playing quite a few Trompowsky's. I already had several games with 3...♘bd7 4.♘f3 h6 (or 4...e6) 5.♗f4 g5 6.♗g3 ♘e4,



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and here 7.♘c3!? was an interesting idea in Rapport-Aronian, Wijk aan Zee 2015, a game that continued 7...♘xg3 8.hxg3 and later on ended in a draw.

4.♘c3!?



I simply like the move 4.♘c3, as now I get a reversed Chigorin with a tempo up (mostly known as a Veresov). The main line would be 4.♗xf6, which would avoid my opponent's 4...e6. I guess that is one of the reasons why 4.♗xf6 is the most popular way to play here, followed by 4...gxf6 5.♘c3 (5.dxc5!? can also be interesting to investigate).

4...e6!?

Black is clearly stopping me from transposing to 4.♗xf6. From now on we leave all kinds of theoretical territories. The price to pay is that objectively speaking White doesn't have any advantage.

After 4...♘c6 I would just transpose with 5.♗xf6.

4...cxd4 would give me a very funny option: 5.♗xf6 (5.exd4 is possible too, of course) 5...gxf6 6.♕xd4 e6 7.e4, and we are going to get into one of the main lines of the Chigorin... with reversed colours (!). I played like this in Round 6 against J.L. Hammer (that game ended in draw).

5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.a3!?

A move which I regarded as a 'useful waiting move', since ...♗b4 at some point would usually cause trouble for my position. 6.♗e2 looks normal, too.

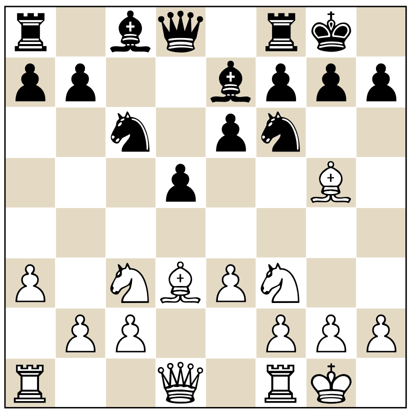
6...♗e7

Black could make a similar effort with 6...a6, but the f8-bishop will have to move sooner or later...

7.dxc5

I decided to clarify what kind of structure we are going to play. 7.♗d3 was another option.

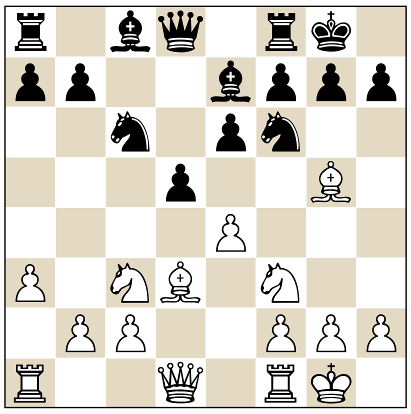
7...♗xc5 8.♗d3 0-0 9.0-0 ♗e7



Black could also include 9...h6 10.♗h4, but I am not sure whom this favours.

10.e4!?

This was the first position in which I really had to make a decision. How to continue? I could wait a bit more with ♕e2 and ♖ad1 or even just ♖e1 and later on e4, or to play it straight away. I voted on the latter one due to a concrete idea.

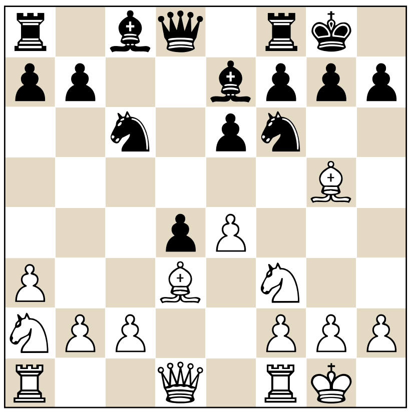


10...d4!?

An ambitious reply. I had concerns about the simplifying 10...dxe4 and how much pressure I can put on Black's position. For instance 11.♘xe4 ♘xe4 12.♗xe7 ♕xe7 13.♗xe4 e5 14.♕e2 f6 15.♖fd1 ♗e6 16.b4 ♖ac8 17.c4, and I don't think White has got real chances to claim an objective advantage, although in a practical game these positions would be playable.

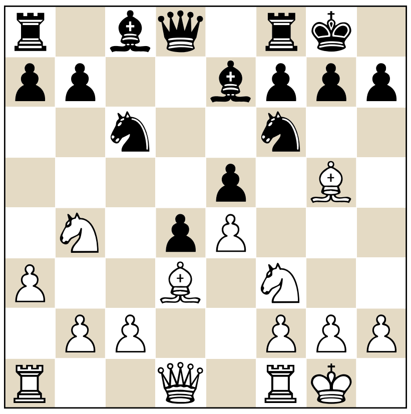
11.♘a2!

I think 11.♘e2 would be the automatic response, but since I have this pawn on a3... I came up with a concrete idea. I won't claim that after my move I am better or anything, but I am just changing the character of the position into something else again, and from my point of view into something more practical.



11...e5 I think this was the best decision. 11...♘d7 was also a logical move, but it fails to work due to some strange lines: 12.♗xe7 ♕xe7 13.♗b5! (quite forcing) 13...e5 14.c3! dxc3 15.♘xc3 ♘f6 16.♘d5, and White has some advantage.

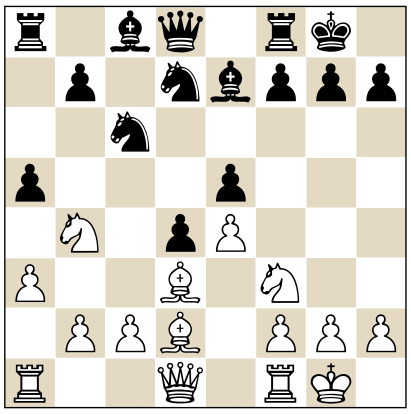
12.♘b4! The key point behind 11.♘a2. Now I am putting pressure on the e5-pawn and at the same time looking at the d5-square.



12...♘d7 On 12...♕d6 White plays 13.♘xc6 13...bxc6 14.♘d2 ♕c7 15.♘c4 ♗e6 16.♕e2, and later on White will try to advance f4 and create an attack. I had expected 12...♗g4!? 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.h3 (getting the bishop pair) 14...♗xf3 15.♕xf3 ♖b8 16.b3 ♘d7 17.♗d2 ♗g5! (a very strong positional move) 18.♗e1!, and the position remains balanced.

13.♗d2 I didn't like the dry positions appearing after 13.♗xe7 ♕xe7 14.c3 dxc3 15.♘d5 ♕d6 16.♘xc3 ♘b6.

13...a5!

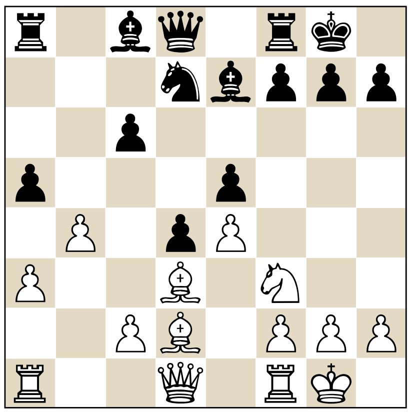


Not an easy move to make. Another option was 13...♗d6 14.c3 ♘c5 15.♗b1!, and White gets a nibble...

14.♘xc6!?

A somewhat strange decision to make, as 14.♘d5 was really obvious and logical. Still, after looking a bit further I didn't find this to be such a great option. After 14.♘d5 I was afraid of 14...♘c5!, and although I cannot keep my bishop pair, I still can try something concrete to cause trouble: 15.b4 ♘xd3 16.cxd3 ♗d6. The point is not to give up the a-file. Now the position is about equal.

14...bxc6 15.b4! The only way; otherwise I might even get worse.



15...axb4

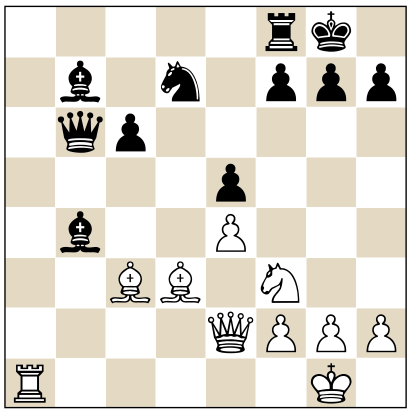
I was expecting 15...♗d6, and now, after 16.♕e2 c5 17.bxa5! ♗c7 18.♖fb1 ♗xa5 19.♗xa5 ♖xa5 20.♘d2, the pressure on the queenside still can cause problems for Black.

16.axb4 ♗b7 17.♕e2 ♕b6

After 17...♕c7 18.c3 c5 19.b5 ♘b6 20.c4 my computer says 0.00, so I guess this means unclear.

18.c3 ♖xa1 Going for a forced line. After 18...c5 19.b5, the next move is c4 with a similar structure as after 17...♕c7. I liked White while playing, but maybe it's just equal.

19.♖xa1 dxc3 20.♗xc3 ♗xb4



21.♖b1

After 21.♗xb4 ♕xb4 22.♖b1, at first

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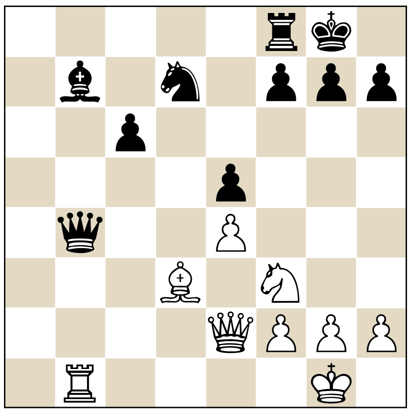
glance it may look as if White is winning a piece,

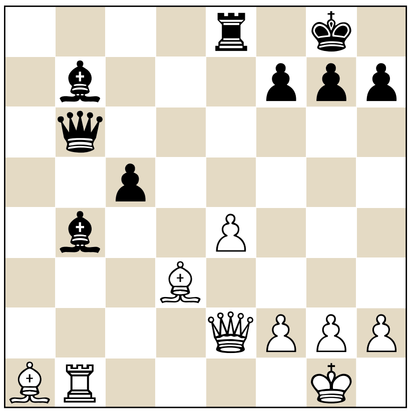


but Black has a good counter-trick up his sleeve: 22...♕a3 23.♖xb7 ♘c5, and White has to give back the piece.

21...c5 22.♘xe5 ♘xe5 23.♗xe5

I knew when entering this position that it was a bit trickier than it seems.

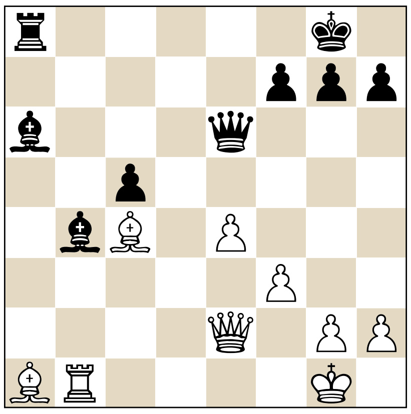
23...♖e8 24.♗a1!



24...♕e6?! The first real mistake! In his upcoming time-pressure my opponent starts misplacing his pieces. 24...♗c8!?, trying to meet 25.♗c4 with 25...♗e6, would have been a better option.

25.f3 ♖a8?! After this move Black's position becomes really difficult... He should have played 25...♖d8.

26.♗c4 ♗a6



MARIA EMELIANOVA

Richard Rapport was in great shape. The young Hungarian had the best performance on Board 2 (2828) and helped his team win the bronze medals.

This move was played with only one minute on my opponent's clock against my 45. Luckily for me there was a tactical continuation that allowed me to exploit his time-trouble even more.

27.♕b2!

This move gives White a clear advantage.

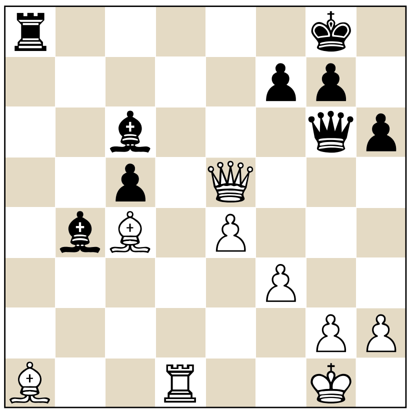
27...♕g6 28.♕a2

After I've just escaped a pin, I now create one myself. The next few moves are quite forced...

28...♗b7 29.♖d1!

Activating my rook thanks to the weak black back rank.

29...h6 30.♕b2 ♗c6 31.♕e5



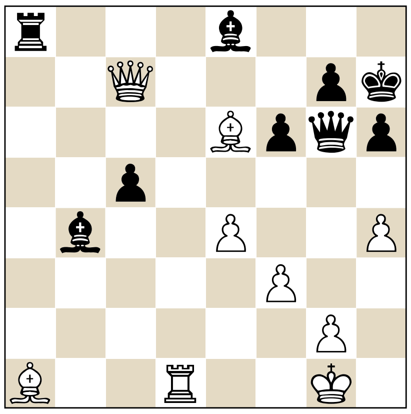
31...♔h7

31...♖e8? would only make my task easier: 32.♖d6! ♖xe5 33.♖xg6, and White is just winning.

32.h4 Bringing a new force into the action! The tempting 32.♖d6?? would even lose after 32...♖xa1+ 33.♔f2 ♗e1+!, and it's Black who will be giving mate.

32...f6? Now the game is over. I am not sure if Black could have saved the game with 32...♗a4.

33.♕c7 ♗e8 34.♗e6! Black cannot avoid losing serious material.



34...♔h8 35.♕b7 ♖a3 36.♕e7

Black resigned. ■

Short Stories

SEDATED SLOTHS

In common with many kids, I spent much of my youth kicking a football, whether it were in our small back garden, with my brothers, or the cul-de-sac, with the offspring of the neighbours. On Saturdays, though, I played in organised matches for my cub-scout team. It went without saying that even at this exceedingly low level we had a referee – usually a parent – who would blow his whistle to indicate corners or fouls. Likewise, a teacher would officiate when at school.

In contrast, much of my early chess was conducted without any arbiter at all. I played literally hundreds of league games for Atherton and Bolton chess clubs sans supervision. If a dispute arose – perhaps over a defective clock – it was resolved by the participants. If they could not agree, the captains would intervene. Such cases were, fortunately, relatively rare and I cannot recall a single irreconcilable wrangle.

Invigilatory oversight was not, and is not, much different even at internationally-rated open tournaments. With typically hundreds of entrants, arbiters are usually stretched so thinly that it would be impossible for them to follow all proceedings – assuming, somewhat heroically, they were so inclined. The situation is unquestionably far better at relatively well-staffed events – like the Tradewise Gibraltar Masters. Yet even on the Rock there can be no guarantee any official will be present to witness a potential contravention of the rules.

Despite the generally light regulatory hand that would be unimaginable in other sports – like tennis, for example – chess tournaments, in general, function reasonably well. When the arbiters, in a fit of pique, went on strike at the China-U.K. match in Liverpool, a few years back, the organiser, Professor David Robertson, simply ignored them. The contest was conducted in excellent spirit, passing without incident, and the Bolshevik protest by disgruntled officialdom was barely noticed – if, indeed, at all.

What may seem a blessing, however, should not be an excuse for complacency: the fact that one can do perfectly well without arbiters most of the time does not mean they are never needed. Unfortunately, when they are actually required to make a decision, they either fail to act, or err, with astonishing frequency. There are various reasons for this, which I shall endeavour to explain...

The one time I was invited to attend the FIDE Rules Commission, as a guest (tellingly, as the only non-IA present), I was struck by how the laws were drafted not for the benefit of the game, but for the convenience of the arbiters. The Preface to the Laws of Chess sets the tone by stating:

‘The Laws assume that arbiters have the necessary competence, sound judgement and absolute objectivity. Too detailed a rule might deprive the arbiter of his freedom of judgement...’

This sounds superficially plausible, until one bothers to think about it. Here is my own translation of what it really means: We arbiters know exactly what we are doing and we will be damned if we allow any rule to circumscribe our powers...

The Laws are so deliberately vague that, as I pointed in New In Chess 2015/6, even major transgressions, such as leaving the venue, have no proscribed punishment. Infractions are constantly referred back to the notorious article 12.9 which permit the arbiter a spectrum of options from giving a warning (point a) up unto expulsion from the tournament (point h) – thus guaranteeing that the Laws will be applied with wild inconsistency. Thankfully, FIDE is only run by the Kremlin, and not ISIS, so beheading is not yet possible. However, retribution short of decapitation is OK, and, naturally, the arbiter will always be right. Whether excessively lenient or harshly draconian, the umpire enjoys untrammelled authority.

Having reserved for themselves unfettered freedom of action, arbiters are, ironically, generally reluctant to take decisions. The rules are basically written on the tacit assumption that no official will be on hand to witness irregularities. This predisposes them to passivity even when they are on hand – as is usually the case at major FIDE events. As a glaring example of utter inertness, it is hard to top the Nepomniachtchi-Nakamura Armageddon game from the recent World Cup – an embarrassing fiasco which prompted this month’s diatribe. For those who have not seen the video, the American castled using both hands, in flagrant contravention of article 4.1 of the Laws of Chess. If you study the evidence frame-by-frame, rather than with the naked eye, Nakamura touched his rook first, which would arguably make castling an illegal move and therefore punishable by forfeit.

The Appeals Committee predictably rejected the Russian's complaint by pointing out that he nullified his claim by making his next move. While this was probably technically the correct decision, it is hardly satisfactory and begs several important questions. What the hell were the arbiters doing, if not sleeping? Why – when you have a major sporting spectacle watched online by many thousands of people – should it be the responsibility of the aggrieved player, rather than the law enforcers, to draw attention to a blatant breach of the rules? What self-respecting sport allows its officials to sit like sedated sloths instead of ensuring fair conduct? Furthermore, what should the correct penance have been, if any?

The cop-out phrase 'The Laws of Chess cannot cover all possible situations that may arise during a game' does not apply here because Nakamura's 'crime' is specified in the legislation. Obviously he is not the first person in chess history to have thus sinned. Lamentably, the punishment is not spelled out clearly though. I have subsequently spoken to a number of senior arbiters about what the correct course of action should have been, and, unsurprisingly, have heard markedly varying opinions. Some have favoured going with the flow (i.e. doing nothing) – while the majority have advocated immediate intervention – although without any consensus as to what shape it should take. It goes without saying that the imposition of a time-penalty is a critical matter in a very fast game. Reducing the time of the offending player is a far severer sanction than increasing the time of the opponent. Alas, everything is at the arbiter's discretion and there is no guidance as to what is fair.

The quality of arbiters is a major cause for concern. At the extreme end you have the downright corrupt. A top player has told me how he was approached by one to 'negotiate' a result for the then forthcoming FIDE Grand Prix, in Astrakhan. To what extent the purported beneficiary was aware of the indecent proposal made on his behalf, by a fellow countryman, is unclear, but the whole affair is nevertheless deeply disturbing. Needless to say, the bent official in question regularly still presides at important tournaments and will doubtless be at the next Olympiad.

> 'I was struck by how the laws were drafted not for the benefit of the game, but for the convenience of the arbiters.'

The awarding of much sought-after arbiter jobs is heavily politicised. Fealty, rather than competence, is the best determinant of whether an arbiter is regularly employed at FIDE events. I have previously referred to a case, in this column, where two arbiters failed to recognise a three-fold repetition that took place in front of their eyes, thus robbing Shadi Paridar of an individual gold medal at Macau 2007. According to written testimony, one of these miscreants – Husan Turdialiev – a FIDE Delegate and Kirsan loyalist, from a high military background – pressurised the General Secretary of the Uzbekistan Chess Federation, A.Yunusov, to apply for his IA title, in 2001, without either authorisation or proper documentation. The absence of signatures did not, apparently, prevent the Arbiters Council, chaired by Panayiotis Nikolopoulos from Greece, from approving the application. One can only speculate why, given that the relevant FIDE Annex at the time showed that several other petitions were rejected precisely for providing incomplete information.

A brief glance at the 'Chess News' section on the FIDE website confirms that arbiting (and its attendant licensing) is an essential industry for the governing body, which has seen a calamitous reduction in its assets over the past couple of years. Indeed, an outsider might conclude, not entirely erroneously, that the production of arbiters and trainers is its principal raison d'être.

There is no requirement for officials to play chess to any minimum standard. One recently qualified friend of mine quite literally did not know the en passant rule two years ago. Privately, he is highly amused by his new status and probably will not mind me saying that expecting such person to record a blitz game accurately is like expecting an 80 year-old football referee, with angina, to keep up with the ball. In cricket, captains submit reports on the quality of umpiring. Being human, even the best will have their off days. But a persistent track record of poor decisions does lead to dismissal from the elite panel. If only chess would have a similar system. Alas, such a proposal is anathema to those in power for whom the game is intrinsically of little value, but instead serves merely as a vehicle for their own aggrandisement. ■

Magnus Carlsen set such an inexorable pace in the Rapid World Championship that he could coast home with three draws.

FERNANDO OFFERMANN

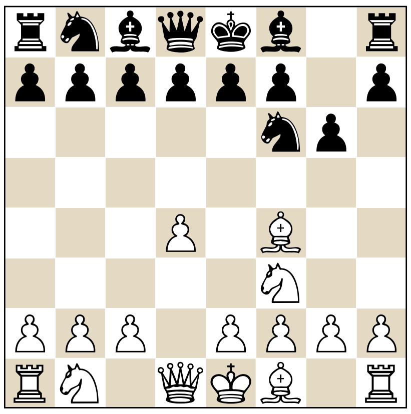
A Feast for the Fast

At the FIDE World Rapid and Blitz Championship in Berlin, Magnus Carlsen successfully defended his rapid title, but lost the blitz crown to Grischuk. Peter Heine Nielsen, Carlsen's trainer, has selected a rapid game that the Norwegian 'won with modest means'. Alexander Grischuk gives a vivid and at times hilarious impression of the final blitz rounds that yielded the Russian his favourite world title for the third time.

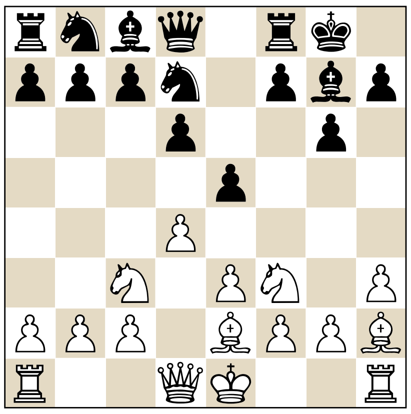
NOTES BY
Peter Heine Nielsen

QP 3.13 – A48
Magnus Carlsen
Teimour Radjabov
Berlin Rapid 2015 (10)

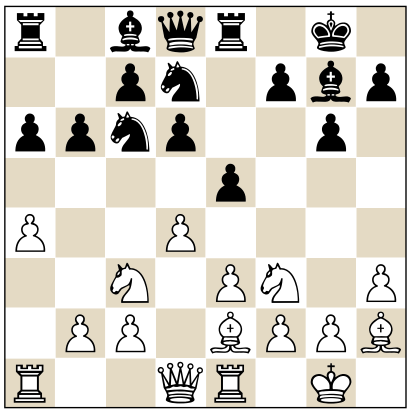
Magnus Carlsen entered the World Rapid and Blitz Championship in Berlin holding all three world titles. But while his suggestion to strip the World Champion of his privileges in the classical discipline seems to be meeting with serious resistance, in rapid and blitz he got exactly what he wanted. All participants started on equal terms, and let the best man win. In rapid he managed to defend his title successfully. Here is one of his wins, a game that he won with modest means.
1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♗f4!?



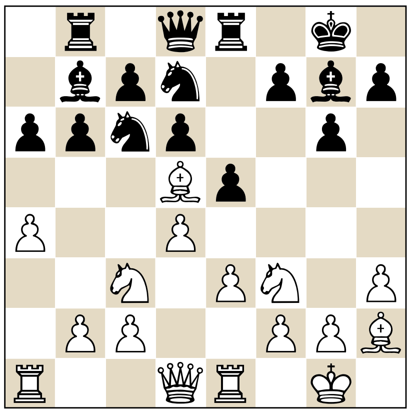
The London System is not regarded very highly, but recently Kramnik quite successfully proved that it contains considerable venom. As Magnus and Kramnik played some training games just before this tournament, it's not hard to guess where the inspiration came from.
3...♗g7 4.e3 d6 5.h3 0-0 6.♗e2 ♘fd7 7.♗h2 e5 8.♘c3!?
Untypical, inspired, but slightly dubious. Magnus does his best to turn it into a concept, but he still lacks the pawn on c4, without which there would be no threat of it being pushed to c5, opening up the position for the bishop on h2.



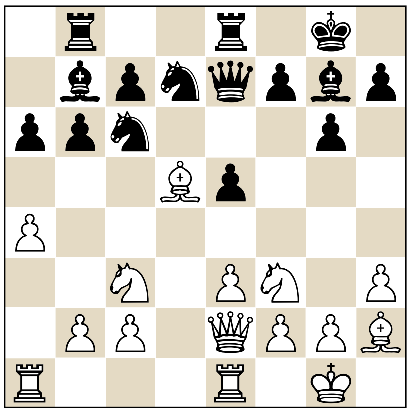
8...♘c6 9.0-0 ♖e8 10.♖e1 a6 11.a4 b6



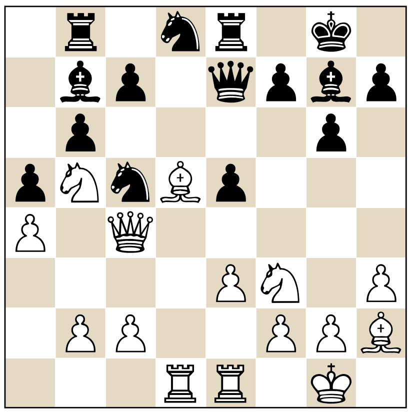
Generally speaking, Black has a very nice position, and exactly what you would hope for against the London System, as the bishop on h2 is completely out of play. True, Black can neither take on d4 nor play ...e4 without bringing it back to life, but Radjabov does a good job of overprotecting the e5-pawn.
12.♗c4!? ♗b7 13.♗d5 ♖b8



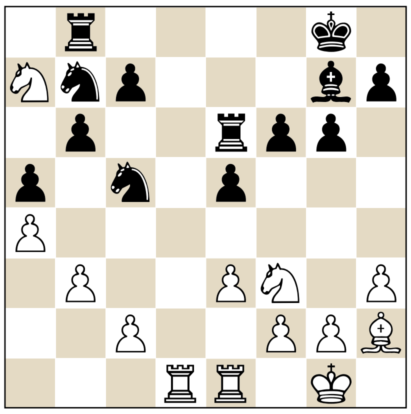
Patient defending, neutralizing the bishop on d5, while keeping e5 under control.
14.dxe5 dxe5
The computer wants to take with the knight, which is decent enough, but of course Black stays loyal to his concept.
15.♕e2 ♕e7



16.♖ad1 If White wanted to admit that the bishop on h2 is misplaced, 16.♗g3 would have been a good option, repositioning it to h4. But Carlsen is still hoping it will wake up and undermine the black centre.
16...♘c5 17.♕c4 a5 18.♘b5 ♘d8



Solid and good. White's activity in the centre is evaporating.
19.♗xb7 ♘dxb7 20.♘a7 ♕e6! 21.♕xe6 ♖xe6 22.b3 f6



At first sight this might look like a model game against the London System, but White is not a lowly-

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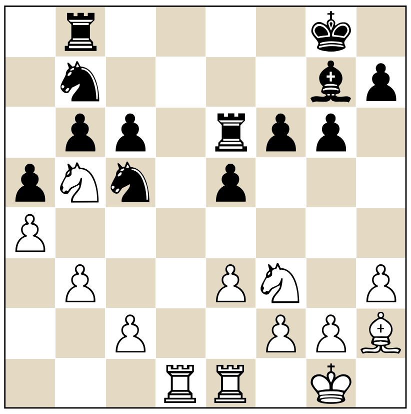
rated player who will keep weakening his position, but the World Champion, who quietly and with admirable patience repairs the defects in his position.

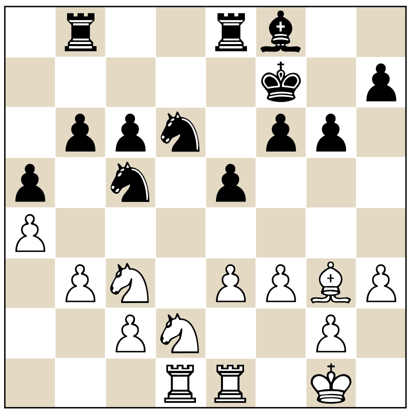
23.♘b5 c6



24.♘c3

24.♘bd4 looks promising, especially if you don't want a long and careful defence. The point is that 24...♖d6 25.♘d2! works tactically, and suddenly gives White the initiative. But 24...♖ee8! 25.♘xc6 ♖a8! leaves the knight stranded on c6, so that ...♖e6 will simply win a piece.

24...♘d6 25.♘d2 ♗f8 26.f3! ♖ee8 27.♗g3 ♔f7



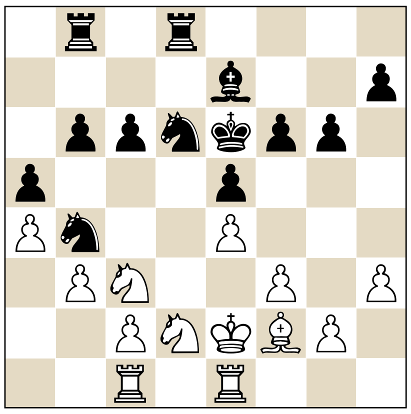
28.♗f2!

Very modest, but still a significant improvement of the white position. On h2 the bishop was completely out of play, and now it is more centrally placed, not only defending but also eyeing the weak pawn on b6, which gives reasons for optimism!

28...♖ed8 29.♔f1 ♘a6 30.♔e2!

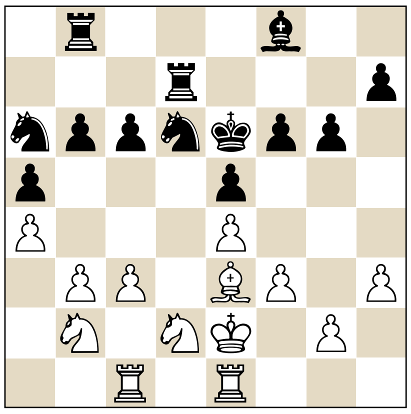
Yet another improvement, centralizing the king.

30...♗e7 31.e4 ♘b4 32.♖c1 ♔e6



Radjabov follows in Magnus' footsteps and keeps his cool. However, White's position is still slightly uncoordinated, so activity with ...f5 or ...b5 before White manages to regroup and prepare for activity of his own, would be logical, .

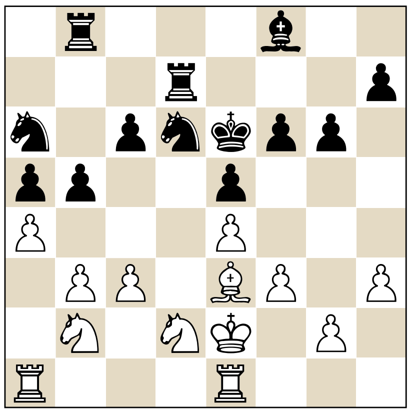
33.♘d1 ♗f8 34.♗e3 ♖d7 35.c3 ♘a6 36.♘b2



It's been a while, but now White has a threat! He wants to play a knight to c4, when the dream, started by regrouping the bishop to f2, that b6 would become weak, would become very real. So Radjabov is forced into activity.

36...b5 37.♖a1!

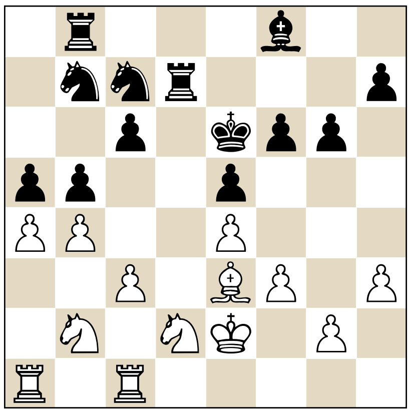
Immediately punishing Black's activity – a5 is weak!



37...♘b7 38.b4

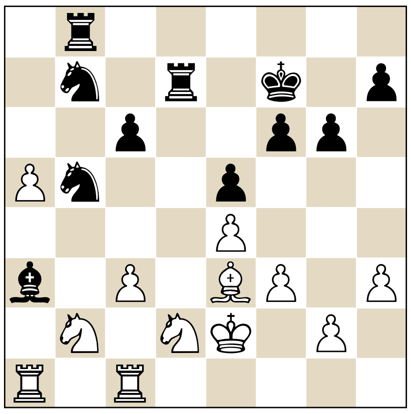
The point is that 38...axb4 39.axb5 cxb5 is impossible due to the knight hanging on a6.

38...♘c7 39.♖ec1!



It is clear that it is White who is exerting the pressure now, and that Magnus is trying, by indirectly aiming at c6, to stop Black from liquidating the queenside. However, 39...axb4! 40.cxb4 ♗xb4 41.♖xc6+ ♔f7 would do no harm to Black, and a draw would be close.

39...♔f7 40.axb5 ♘xb5 41.bxa5 ♗a3



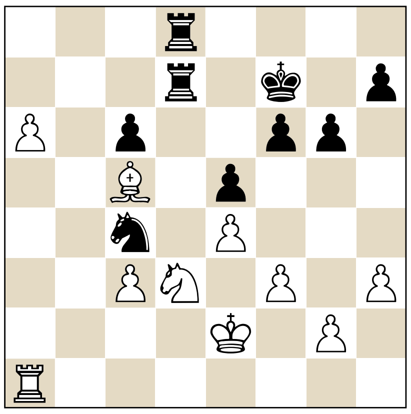
Radjabov's tactical point, against which Magnus chooses a radical solution.

42.♖xa3

However, 42.♖c2 ♗xb2 43.♖xb2 ♘xa5 44.♔f2! might objectively be better, as White keeps serious pressure after 44...♘b7 45.c4. Black's pieces are clumsily placed, and White controls the open files on the queenside.

42...♘xa3 43.a6 ♘d6 44.♘d3 ♘dc4 45.♘xc4 ♘xc4 46.♗c5 ♖bd8 47.♖d1 ♖a8 48.♖a1 ♖ad8

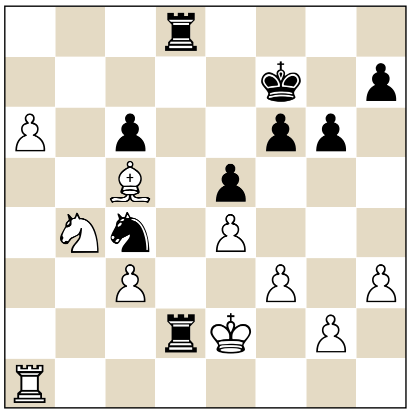
> 'Now repeating moves might have been the default solution for less brave players, but White correctly assesses that Black's threats are not lethal.'



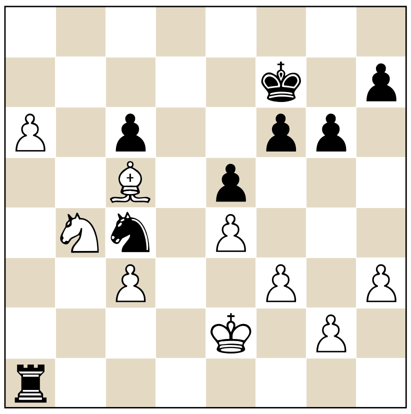
White obviously has sufficient compensation for the exchange due to the dangerous passed a-pawn, but Black has generated real counterplay on the d-file.

Now repeating moves with 49.♖d1 might have been the default solution for less brave players, but White correctly assesses that Black's threats are not lethal.

49.♘b4! ♖d2+



50.♔f1 ♖d1+ 51.♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 52.♔e2 ♖a1



53.a7?

A mistake, allowing Black's king to get to the queenside in time.

53.♔d3!? was objectively better, the point being that 53...♘a3 54.c4! strands the black knight, which then will not be able to stop the white pawn. If Black managed to find 53...♘b2+ 54.♔c2 ♘a4 55.♗f2 c5 56.♘d5 ♘xc3, he'd still keep fighting chances for a draw, as the endgame after 57.♘xc3 ♖xa6 58.♗xc5

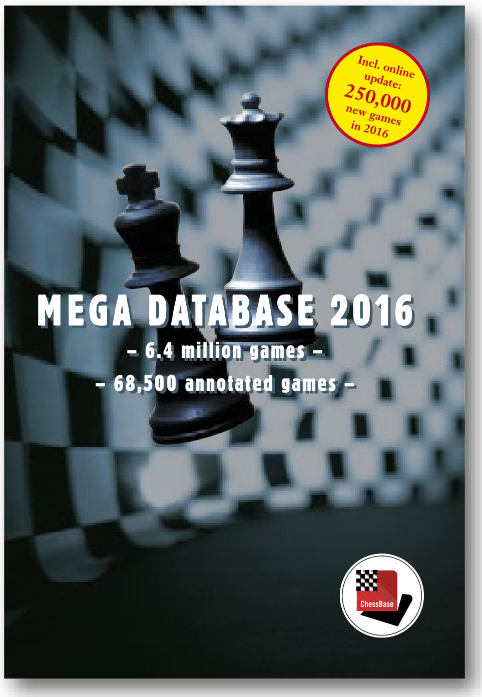
Berlin 2015 rapid

1	Magnus Carlsen	NOR	2847	11½	2723
2	Ian Nepomniachtchi	RUS	2789	10½	2712
3	Teimour Radjabov	AZE	2741	10½	2681
4	Leinier Dominguez	CUB	2749	10½	2673
5	Dmitry Bocharov	RUS	2577	10	2712
6	Vladimir Kramnik	RUS	2798	10	2696
7	Vladimir Onischuk	UKR	2692	10	2696
8	Vassily Ivanchuk	UKR	2835	10	2690
9	Igor Kovalenko	LAT	2687	10	2686
10	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	AZE	2784	10	2676
11	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	FRA	2756	10	2673
12	Ernesto Inarkiev	RUS	2733	10	2648
13	Denis Khismatullin	RUS	2574	9½	2737
14	Rustam Kasimdzhanov	UZB	2619	9½	2735
15	Vladimir Malakhov	RUS	2662	9½	2733
16	Yuriy Kryvoruchko	UKR	2694	9½	2722
17	Anton Korobov	UKR	2664	9½	2706
18	Sergei Zhigalko	BLR	2698	9½	2698
19	Sergey Karjakin	RUS	2805	9½	2678
20	Saleh A.R. Salem	UAE	2631	9½	2672
21	Vladimir Fedoseev	RUS	2681	9½	2668
22	Radoslaw Wojtaszek	POL	2711	9½	2659
23	David Navara	CZE	2673	9½	2655
24	Gadir Guseinov	AZE	2705	9½	2651
25	Vishy Anand	IND	2800	9½	2646

158 players, 15 rounds

ChessBase

Mega Database 2016


Incl. online update: 250,000 new games in 2016
MEGA DATABASE 2016
– 6.4 million games –
– 68,500 annotated games –
ChessBase

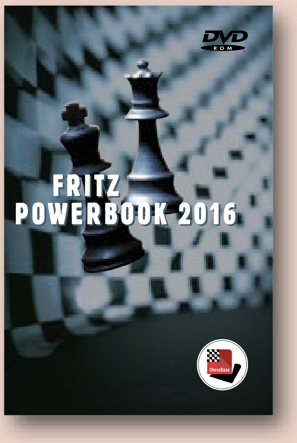
If you want to compete successfully, you have to know the state of affairs, which variations are played today and why some old ideas just are no good anymore. In short, you need a database which is up-to-date, complete and reliable - and which enables you to get going right away. And of course one step ahead yesterday may mean one step behind tomorrow - you always have to keep up. This is ensured by yet another feature of the new Mega Databases 2016 since the Online-Upgrade Service is included for the whole year 2016.*

The Mega Database 2016 contains all games for the the top-class events in 2015: Wijk aan Zee, the World Team Championship, Norway Chess 2015, Biel Chess Festival, Sinquefield Cup, FIDE World Cup and many more. However, it has more than just the last 12 months to offer - the total number of recorded games now tops a whopping 6,466,288!

The huge number of games is not the only feature Mega Database has to offer the majority of Fritz and ChessBase users: the extremely high quality standard, only achievable through continuous and thorough editing and correction of game data is one major plus point, with the other being that Mega Database 2016 is essentially the largest annotated games collections in the world - 68,000 games provide insights into the minds of the masters!

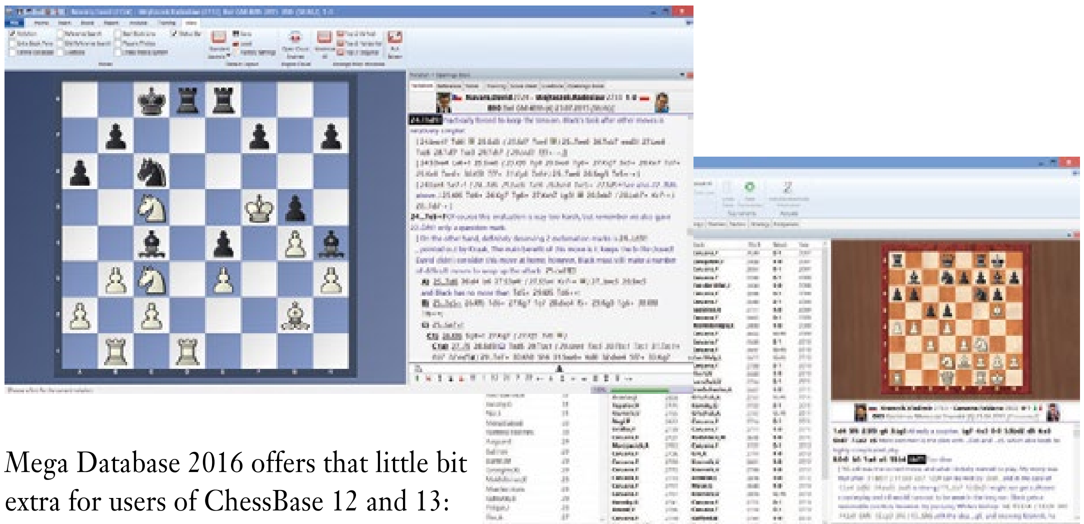
Mega Database 2016 also includes analysis from top GMs from every edition of ChessBase Magazine to date - including the issue #168! If you really want to get to know a particular variation or understand a master novelty, then these analytical sources are a virtual treasure trove of information and the Mega Database is your one-stop shop!

Powerbook 2016



The Fritz Powerbook 2016 contains 21 million opening positions, derived from 1,5 million high class tournament games. Together with each position all relevant information is stored: all moves that were played in the position, by players of what average rating, with what success and performance results. The Fritz Powerbook 2016 represents the state of the art of current openings theory. Discover exciting and tricky new lines and practice them against Fritz! 49,90 €

Update Powerbook 2016 from Powerbook 2015 29,90 €



Mega Database 2016 offers that little bit extra for users of ChessBase 12 and 13: Mega also includes an active update service subscription until the end of 2016 - 5,000 new games every week to keep your database completely up to date - keep your finger on the pulse by letting your Mega grow over the course of the year to include an additional 250,000 games!*

Mega Database 2016	159,90 €
Update from Mega 2015	59,90 €
Update from older Mega or from Big 2015	99,90 €

* ChessBase 12 or 13 required.

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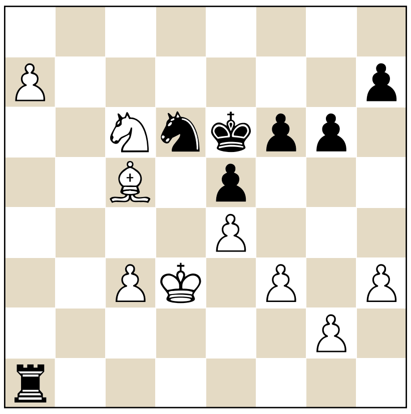
must be borderline between a win or a draw.

53...♔e6 54.♘xc6 ♘d6 55.♔d3

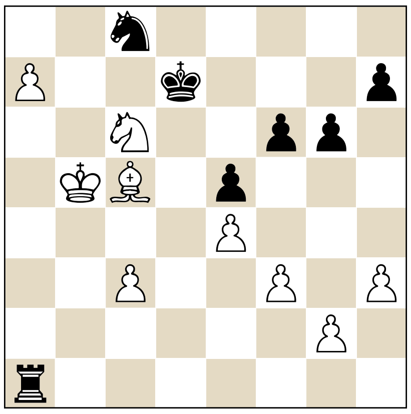


55...♘c8?

55...♔d7! 56.♘b4 ♘c8 would have eliminated the passed pawn, and while 57.♘d5, attacking f6, would be enough to draw, White's winning chances are gone.

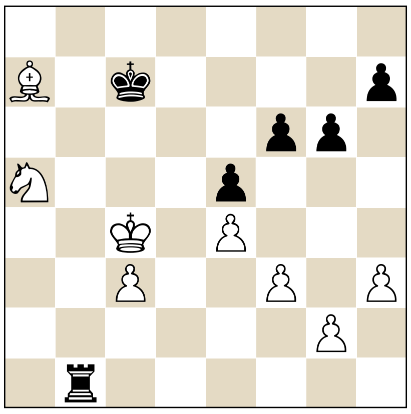
56.♔c4 ♔d7 57.♔b5

The difference: White's king was allowed to support the knight.



57...♔c7 58.♘a5! Radjabov must have missed this move. Despite being close, the black king did not get there in time, and Black has to sacrifice the knight.

58...♖b1+ 59.♔c4 ♘xa7 60.♗xa7



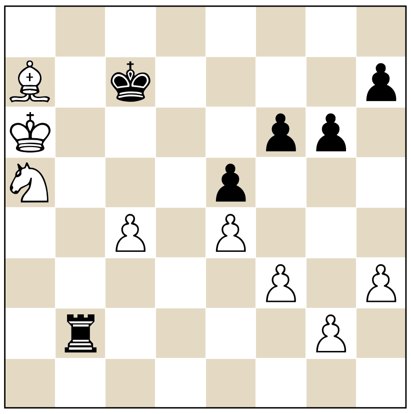
Ian Nepomniachtchi and Magnus Carlsen: good friends, a similar gait, and always happy to share a joke.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

60...♖a1?

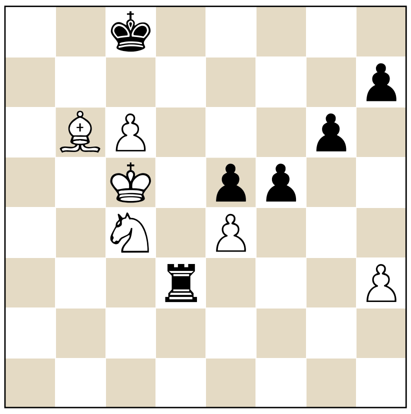
This is a mistake. 60...♖b2!, immediately attacking the pawn on g2, was definitely preferable. Radjabov now forces the white king as far away as possible from the kingside, but he had missed that the king is much better placed on a6 to help the c-pawn to queen.

61.♔b5! ♖b1+ 62.♔a6! ♖b2 63.c4!



The white set-up on the queenside is ideal; nothing will be able to stop the pawn now.

63...♖xg2 64.♗b6+ ♔c8 65.c5 ♖f2 66.c6 ♖xf3 67.♘c4 ♖d3 68.♔b5 f5 69.♔c5



69...♖c3

Instead, 69...f4 70.♘d6+ ♖xd6 71.♔xd6 also makes little sense. While the c-pawn will not queen immediately, after ♔xe5 White will be more than in time to stop any black counterplay by his kingside pawns.

70.♔d5

And without any hope of kingside counterplay, Radjabov resigned.

In no way a classical error-free win by Carlsen, but of those he had few in the rapid championship. However, it showed an impressive blend of patience, precision and optimism, which allowed him to defend his title, and even cruise to the finish-line with three draws.

■ ■ ■

NOTES BY
Alexander Grischuk

QP 6.5 – A48
Magnus Carlsen
Alexander Grischuk
Berlin Blitz 2015 (15)

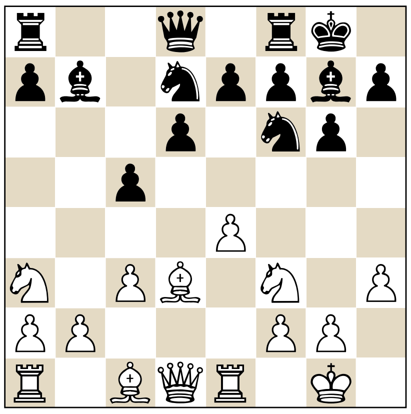
After a series of miserable results through the whole of 2015, the World Rapid and Blitz championship didn't seem to be much of an improvement for me. The Rapid Championship was a disaster, my +3 score at the end was the best I had had in the tournament. The Blitz started even worse, 3/6 and a completely hopeless position against Simen Agdestein in Round 7. However, after miraculously winning that game, I managed to win three more in a row and with +4 after Day 1, there was a glimmer of hope going into the final day. The final day I started with White against Teimour Radjabov. After getting a clear advantage and almost an extra minute out of the opening, I started to play ridiculously slowly and embarrassingly badly. Teimour, on the contrary, played fast and strongly and deservedly won the game. That could have been the end, but instead it was the beginning. Finally I got angry at myself and something clicked. After winning two tense but not particularly remarkable games against Pavel Eljanov and Dmitry Bocharov, I was paired with Magnus Carlsen on virtual Board 1 – virtual because due to some TV contract Magnus was playing all games on 'Board 1', no matter what. So in fact it was Board 2 or 3, which was still the highest for me so far.

1.♘f3 c5 2.e3 ♘f6 3.d4 g6 4.c3 b6 5.dxc5 bxc5 6.e4 ♗g7 7.♗d3

Since 7.e5 ♘g4 8.♕d5 ♘c6 doesn't work for White, he has to let Black finish his development.

7...0-0 8.0-0 d6 9.♘a3 ♗b7 10.♖e1 ♘bd7 11.h3

Black is obviously OK here, but he still needs to decide what do, which is never easy in blitz in a non-standard position. This is why I like my decision.



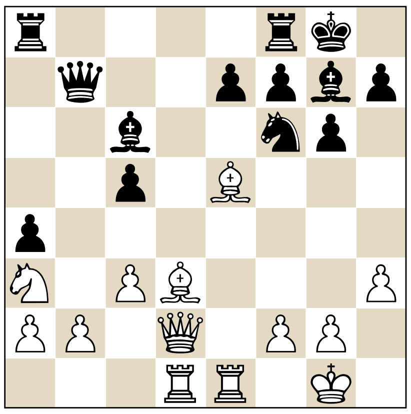
11...a5!? This move wastes time, of course, and it might not be best objectively, but it gives Black a long-term advantage in the form of the weakness of White's queenside pawns.

> 'That could have been the end, but instead it was the beginning. Finally I got angry at myself and something clicked.'

12.♗f4 a4 13.♕d2 ♗c6 14.♖ad1 ♕b6

Slightly more accurate is 14...♕b8, when 15.e5?! can be met by 15...♘h5.

15.e5!? dxe5 16.♘xe5 ♘xe5 17.♗xe5 ♕b7



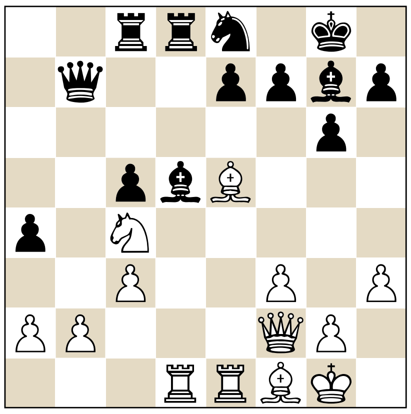
18.f3 18.♗f1?? loses material after 18...♘e4 19.♕f4 f6, so White has to weaken his king. It may seem irrelevant at this point, and it might never become relevant if White plays very precisely, but if things start going wrong for White, this weakening move could become fatal.

18...♖fd8 19.♕f2 ♖ac8 20.♘c4

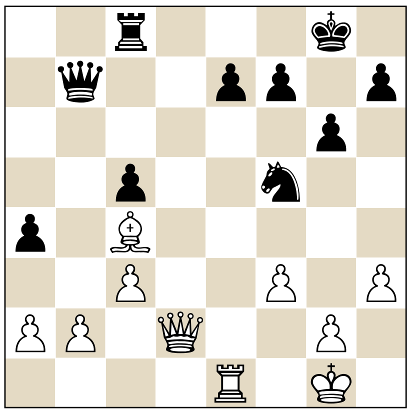
More tricky was 20.♕e2!?, with the 'hidden' threat of ♗a6, but after 20...♕b6 21.♘c4 ♕a7 Black is alright.

20...♗d5 21.♗f1 ♘e8

The computer thinks the position is still equal, but in a practical game I clearly prefer Black, and the course of the game shows that it is indeed much harder to play this position with White.



22.♗xg7 ♘xg7 23.♖d2 ♗xc4 24.♗xc4 ♖xd2 25.♕xd2 ♘f5



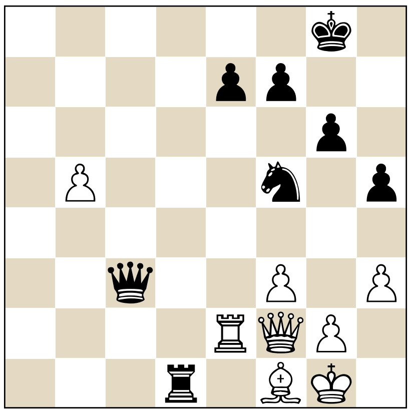
26.b3 Better was 26.♕f4!, when 26...♕xb2?! is not recommended because of 27.♖xe7.

26...axb3 27.axb3 ♕c7 28.♕f2 ♖d8 29.♗f1 h5?!

29...e6! gives Black a slight advantage.

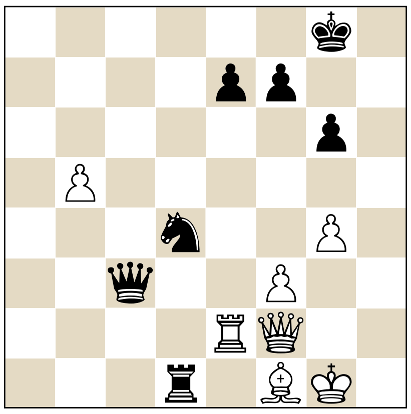
30.b4? Apparently, 30.g4! would still have kept the balance.

30...cxb4 31.cxb4 ♕c3 32.b5 ♖d2 33.♖e2 ♖d1 White's position is falling apart, but with seconds on his clock Magnus shows that it's not by accident that he has won five (two classical, two rapid and one blitz) World Championships in a row.



34.g4! hxg4 Such moves are made instantly, instinctively and automatically in blitz, but much stronger was 34...♘d4! 35.♖xe7 ♖d2! 36.♗e2 ♘e6!, and Black should win. The difference will be seen in the next note.

35.hxg4 ♘d4



36.♖e3 It looks as if White will be able to save the game with 36.♖xe7! ♖d2 (36...♘xf3+ is surprisingly toothless: 37.♔g2 ♘g5 38.♕e3 ♕f6 39.♗e2) 37.♗e2, the difference with 34...♘d4 being that after 37...♘e6 (White is completely paralysed after 37...♕c5 38.♖e8+ ♔g7 39.♔f1 ♕c1+ 40.♔g2 ♕b2 41.♔f1, but I don't see how Black can win) 38.♖e8+ ♔g7 White has 39.♕h4!, and the threat of mate on h8 forces Black to give a perpetual.

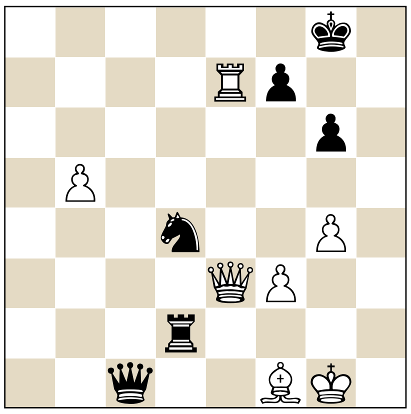
36...♕c1 37.♖xe7 ♖d2?

Black could win nicely by 37...♔f8!, and the white rook has no place to hide: 38.♖e4 (38.♖e3 ♖xf1+ 39.♕xf1 ♕xe3+; 38.♖e5 ♖xf1+ 39.♕xf1 ♘xf3+; 38.♖a7 ♖d2) 38...♖xf1+ 39.♕xf1 ♘xf3+ 40.♔g2 ♕xf1+ 41.♔xf1 ♘d2+.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

Alexander Grischuk: 'The good thing for Black, however, is that he doesn't have anything to lose, since he is lost already!'

38.♕e3?



38...♘e2+??

I had around 10 seconds here, and there is no shame in not finding the study-like 38...♕e1!!, and Black wins: 39.♖e8+ ♔h7 40.f4 (40.♕xe1 ♘xf3+ 41.♔h1 ♖h2 mate) 40...♘f3+ 41.♕xf3 ♕xe8 42.b6 ♖b2 43.b7 ♕e1.

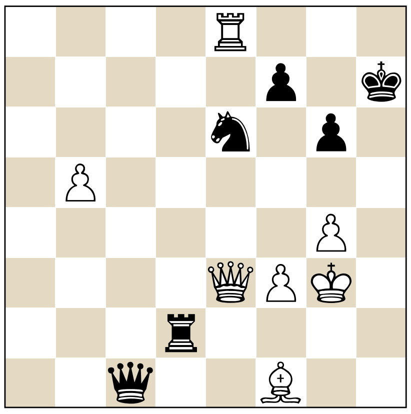
However, it *is* a shame not to find the primitive 38...♕d1, and White would have had to resign if not for the amazing fact that after 39.♖xf7 ♔xf7 40.♕f4+ it is a perpetual! The thing is that by checking precisely White stops Black from defending his king with ...♘e6 and also from taking it to b4 or a5: 40...♔e6 41.♕e4+ ♔d6 42.♕f4+ ♔c5 (42...♔e7 43.♕c7+) 43.♕f8+ ♔b6 44.♕d8+ etc.

39.♔g2 White could build a fortress with the simple 39.♕xe2 ♖xe2 40.♖xe2 ♕c5+ 41.♖f2, but with both of us playing on increment seconds Magnus wants to win!

39...♘f4+ 40.♔g3 ♘e6 41.♖e8+?!

A step into the wrong direction. 41.♖xe6 fxe6 42.♕xe6+ would inevitably lead to a perpetual by one of the sides.

41...♔h7



42.♕e5??

42.♖xe6 fxe6 43.♕xe6 was still a draw.

42...♘g7 The only move, but a winning one. **43.♗g2?! ♘xe8?!** 43...♕g1! would have forced immediate resignation, but the text is good enough. **44.♕xe8 ♕c7+ 45.♔h3 ♔g7 46.♕e3 ♕d6 47.b6 ♖b2 48.♕c3+ ♕f6 49.♕xf6+ ♔xf6 50.f4 ♖xb6 51.♗d5 ♖d6 52.g5+ ♔f5 53.♗xf7 ♔xf4 54.♔h4 ♔f5** White resigned.

After this game I went to the real Board 1, facing the leader, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, who was 1½ points ahead of me, as White. That seemed like a good opportunity to try to close the gap, but despite getting a promising position after the opening I never managed to really make him sweat – draw. Five rounds to go. I beat Hrant Melkumyan with a good deal of luck, then ground down Sergey Karjakin in an equal but somewhat tricky endgame.

Three rounds to go. I face Vladimir Kramnik with white and get a nice position, then make an altogether awful move (15.♗f1 – the poor execution of a poor idea) and barely survive. Our post-game chat confirms that Vladimir is in excellent form with his optimism reaching new heights: – Sasha, I think I was winning by force at one point. – Well, maybe, but where exactly? – I could have played ♕d7 after ♕e4. – But that's exactly what you did! – Hmm, you are right...

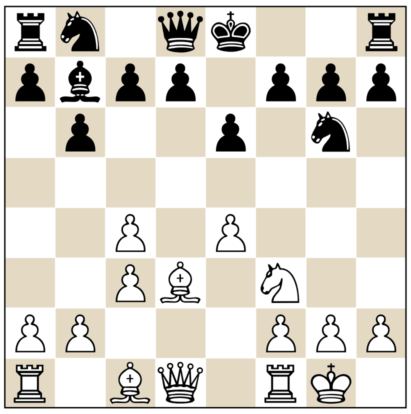
With two rounds to go I decide to check the standings for the first time, and much to my surprise I find myself sharing 1st place! Using Sherlock Holmes's deductive method I conclude that Maxime cannot have scored too many points in the last three rounds... Seriously though, there is no reason for euphoria whatsoever, since my tiebreaks are obviously awful, but still, sharing first means that if I win my last two games, I'd be in with a chance. Or rather, since it is impossible to win two games at once, if I win *one* game. And then *one* more...

EO 63.3 – A10
Evgeny Tomashevsky
Alexander Grischuk
Berlin Blitz 2015 (20)

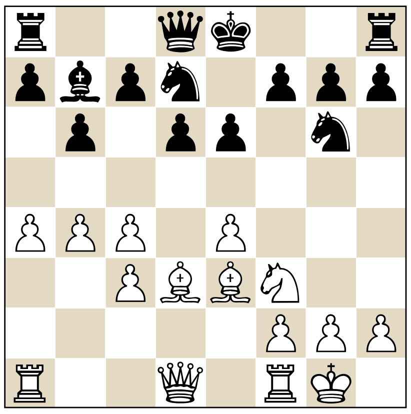
1.c4 b6 More on b6-schemes in the next game, but one thing I want to mention here: against 1.c4, 1...b6 is actually surprisingly decent.

2.♘c3 ♗b7 3.e4 e6 4.♘f3 ♗b4 5.♗d3 ♘e7 6.0-0 ♗xc3 7.dxc3 ♘g6

Both sides can be satisfied with the outcome of the opening: White might be slightly better, but Black's position is very solid and elastic.



8.♗e3 d6 9.b4 ♘d7 10.a4



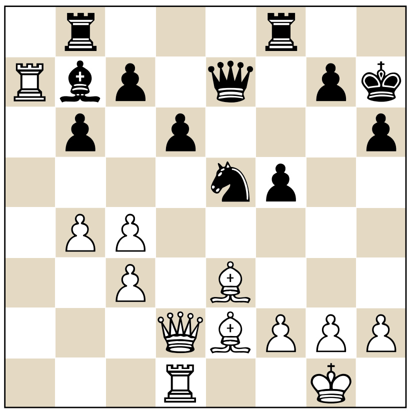
10...0-0 Here 10...a5 would be desirable from a positional point of view, but it allows 11.c5!, and after 11...bxc5 12.bxc5 ♘xc5 13.♗xc5 dxc5 14.♗b5+ c6 15.♗c4 White gets very nice compensation.

11.a5 ♖b8

Vacating the a8-square in case of a5-a6. White is probably still slightly better, but he needs to play very precisely in order to prove it. Simply shuffling pieces around won't do him any good, since Black's position is very healthy.

12.♕c2 h6 13.♖fd1 ♕e7 14.axb6 axb6 15.♖a7 ♘de5 16.♘xe5 ♘xe5 17.♗e2 f5 18.exf5 exf5 19.♕d2 ♔h7

Now Black is obviously fine.



20.f3 ♘c6?!

20...♕e6 would have won a pawn, since 21.c5 dxc5 22.bxc5 ♖fd8 is very awkward for White.

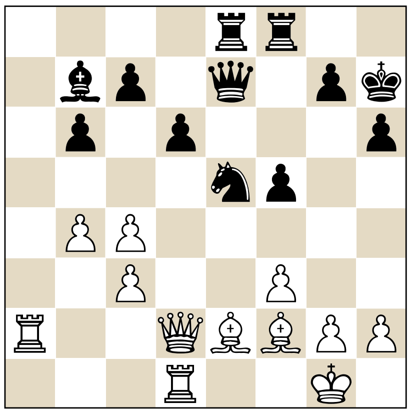
21.♖a2 ♖be8?

When playing 20...♘c6, I thought that I would win a piece thanks to the pin on the e-file.

22.♗f2

Oops, the bishop on e2 is protected!

22...♘e5



23.c5?

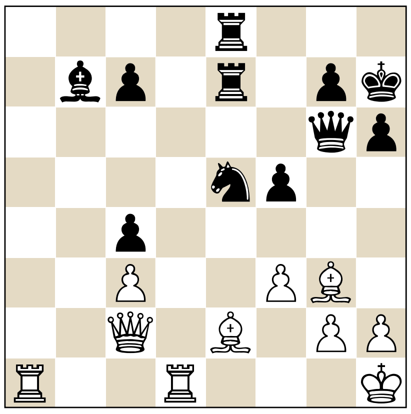
23.♖a7 would have forced the sad retreat 23...♖b8, and after 24.♖e1 White is in the driver's seat.

23...dxc5 24.bxc5 bxc5

Now it is roughly equal again, but Black quickly takes over the initiative.

25.♖e1 ♕d6 26.♕c2 c4 27.♖d1 ♕g6 28.♗g3 ♖e7 29.♔h1 ♖fe8 30.♖aa1??

A terrible blunder, but Black was in full control already, both on the board and on the clock.



30...f4

Now Black wins a piece, and although the realization was far from exemplary (it took me a further 40 moves to convert my advantage), the win was never in any doubt.

FERNANDO OFFERMANN

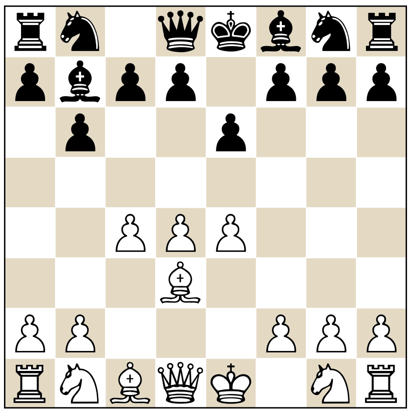
Champion! For the third time Alexander Grischuk wins the Blitz world title. Peter Svidler and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave are the first to congratulate him.

After this win I went from sharing 1st-4th to sharing 1st-2nd with Vladimir Kramnik. Maxime Vachier-Lagrave followed on half point less, but he had the best tie-breaks of the whole tournament. So anyone of us could become the winner.

VO 3.5 – A40
Boris Gelfand
Alexander Grischuk
Berlin 2015 Blitz (21)

1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6
I prepared this 'opening' for the 2nd game of my match against Pavel Eljanov at the World Cup in Baku after I had lost the first game. It served me very well in Berlin, but none of my opponents went for the principal move 3.e4. Boris, however, hardly ever backs down in the opening.

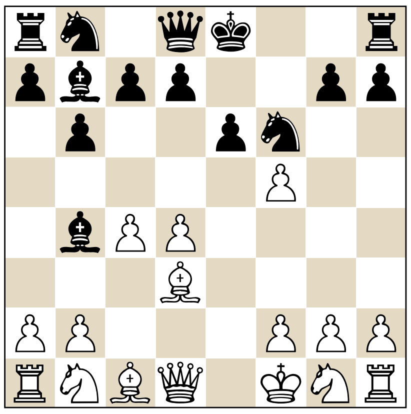
3.e4! ♗b7 4.♗d3



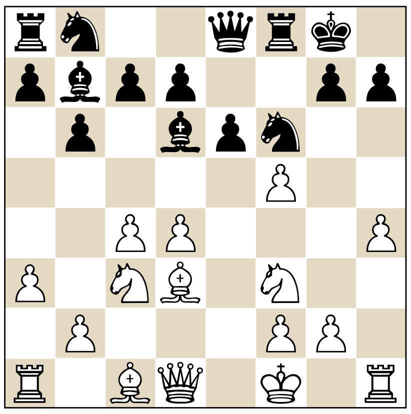
4...f5 Of course, both 4...♗b4+ and 4...♘c6 are better than 4...f5, but both leave Black's position worse and without any upside.

5.exf5 ♗b4+
5...♗xg2 has been known to lose by force for a long time.

6.♔f1 ♘f6
A sort of tabiya. When analysing this position with an engine, you will find that White is 'winning' in a number of ways, but it is never a 'boom-boom-boom' type of win. True, White initially has a lot of good moves, but he has to keep playing very precisely for a long time in a very complicated situation. And if things start going wrong for him, his position can spiral downwards very quickly. So, despite being 'lost', I was not too upset with the outcome of the opening.



7.♘f3 0-0 8.a3 ♗d6 9.♘c3 ♕e8 10.h4

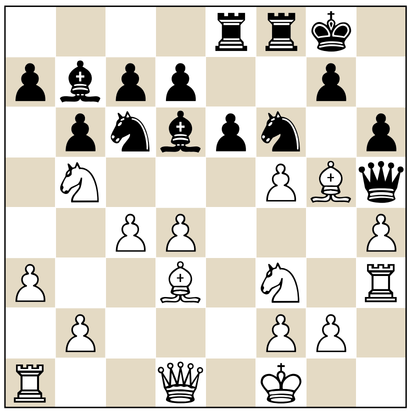


One of the very strong options. Boris showed that he didn't see this position for the first time by playing 10.h4 very quickly.

10...♘c6
I have no other option than to keep developing pieces and hoping for the best. The good thing for Black, however, is that he doesn't have anything to lose, since he is lost already!

11.♗g5 ♕h5 12.♖h3 ♖ae8 13.♘b5
Instead, 13.b4! was clearly stronger.

13...h6



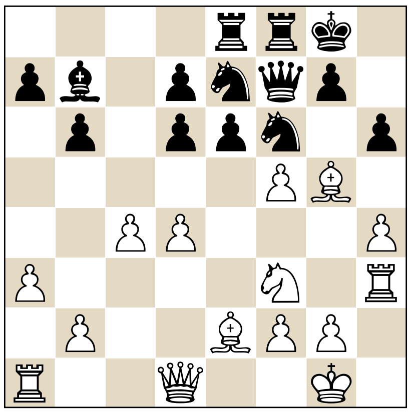
14.♘xd6 Better was 14.fxe6! dxe6 15.♕c2! ♘e7 16.c5!.

14...cxd6 15.♔g1 ♘e7
Things are starting to get unclear.

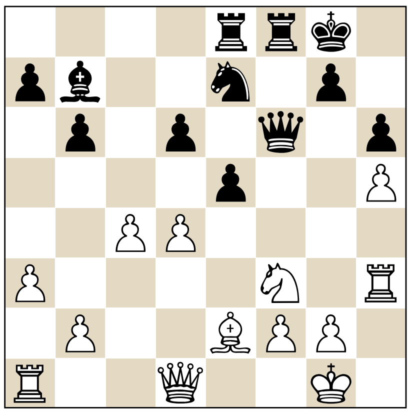
16.♗e2?! ♕f7
And now they are not clear at all.

Berlin 2015 blitz

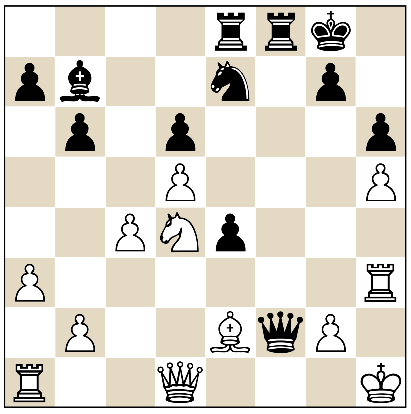
1	Alexander Grischuk	RUS	2814	15½	2699
2	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	FRA	2854	15	2727
3	Vladimir Kramnik	RUS	2763	15	2705
4	Vassily Ivanchuk	UKR	2789	14½	2691
5	Ian Nepomniachtchi	RUS	2831	14½	2642
6	Magnus Carlsen	NOR	2914	14	2720
7	Peter Svidler	RUS	2726	14	2691
8	David Navara	CZE	2806	14	2646
9	Yuri Vovk	UKR	2566	13½	2742
10	Rustam Kasimdzhanov	UZB	2641	13½	2720
11	Levon Aronian	ARM	2817	13½	2710
12	Boris Gelfand	ISR	2743	13½	2700
13	Leinier Dominguez	CUB	2717	13½	2687
14	Rauf Mamedov	AZE	2777	13½	2659
15	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	AZE	2749	13½	2648
16	Pavel Ponkratov	RUS	2666	13½	2608
17	Sergey Karjakin	RUS	2759	13	2720
18	Nikita Vitiugov	RUS	2655	13	2711
19	Evgeny Tomashevsky	RUS	2694	13	2683
20	Anton Korobov	UKR	2705	13	2663
21	Dmitry Andreikin	RUS	2781	13	2663
22	Vishy Anand	IND	2791	13	2658
23	Laurent Fressinet	FRA	2699	13	2647
24	Vladimir Fedoseev	RUS	2765	13	2644
25	Evgeny Alekseev	RUS	2729	13	2633
26	Vladimir Malakhov	RUS	2707	13	2596
27	Tigran Petrosian	ARM	2630	12½	2745
28	Teimour Radjabov	AZE	2808	12½	2730
29	Grzegorz Gajewski	POL	2520	12½	2704
30	Dariusz Swiercz	POL	2555	12½	2666
31	Hrant Melkumyan	ARM	2701	12½	2661
32	Vladimir Onischuk	UKR	2743	12½	2651
33	Gawain Jones	ENG	2690	12½	2646
34	Aleksey Dreev	RUS	2741	12½	2641
35	Ruslan Ponomariov	UKR	2770	12½	2635
36	Eduardo Iturrizaga	VEN	2700	12½	2632
37	Igor Kovalenko	LAT	2684	12½	2618
44	Eltaj Safarli	AZE	2633	12	2669
188 players, 21 rounds					



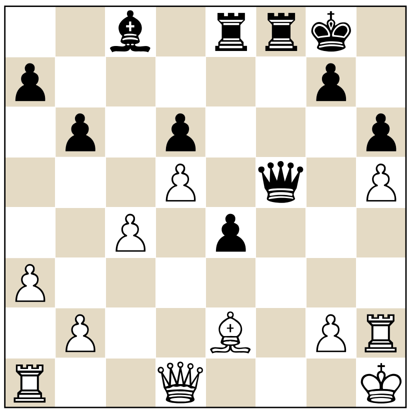
17.fxe6 dxe6 18.♗xf6?! ♕xf6
I already prefer Black.
19.h5 e5



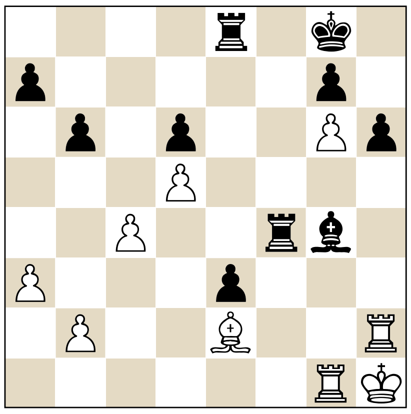
20.d5?
20.c5!! was essential to stay in the game, but how easy is it to spot this in blitz?
20...e4
White is already almost lost. Downward spiral at its best: without White making major blunders his position collapsed within six moves!
21.♘d4 ♕xf2+ 22.♔h1



22...♗c8?!
Even better was 22...♘f5 23.♘xf5 ♖xf5.
23.♖h2?
23.g4! was the last chance, although Black is clearly better after 23...♕f6.
23...♘f5 24.♘xf5 ♕xf5
Now it is over.



25.♕d4 e3 26.g4 ♕g5 27.♖g1 ♖f4 28.♕d3 ♗xg4 29.♕g6 ♕xg6 30.hxg6



Here I had a huge time advantage (over a minute vs seconds for Boris), and I spent almost all of it searching for the cleanest win. The computer disagrees, but I still like my decision. Black transposes to a rook endgame, which any Soviet 'KMS' (candidate to the master title) would win against the World Champion 10 times out of 10.
30...♗xe2 31.♖xe2 ♖h4+ 32.♔g2 ♖g4+ 33.♔h2 ♖xg1 34.♔xg1 ♔f8 35.♔g2 ♖e5 36.♔f3 ♔e7 37.b4 ♔f6 38.♔f4 h5 39.c5 bxc5 40.bxc5 dxc5 41.d6 ♖d5 42.♖xe3 ♖xd6 43.♖c3 ♖d4+ 44.♔e3 ♖d5 45.♔e4 ♖e5+ 46.♔f4 ♖f5+ 47.♔e4 ♔xg6
Boris resigned and congratulated me, but I couldn't even say 'Thank you' because it was not clear if there was anything to congratulate me with. If Vladimir Kramnik won against Vassily Ivanchuk, he would be the champion!

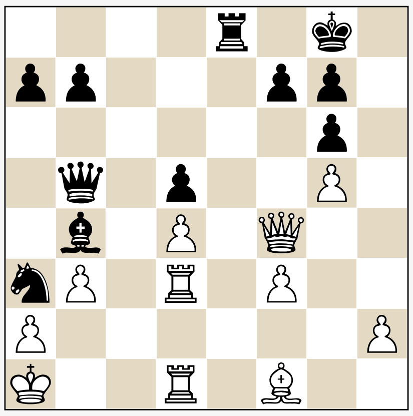
I rushed to their board and found them playing an endgame '3 pawns + 2 knights vs 2 pawns + 2 knights on one side'. Vassily had three pawns, so I should be able to relax, but in blitz, with so many knights, who knows? It is always possible to put your king 'en prise' and Vassily has the propensity to lose on time sometimes. Fortunately, neither of those things happened, and the game ended in a draw. Which meant I became the sole winner – the champion!! ■

MAXIMize your Tactics

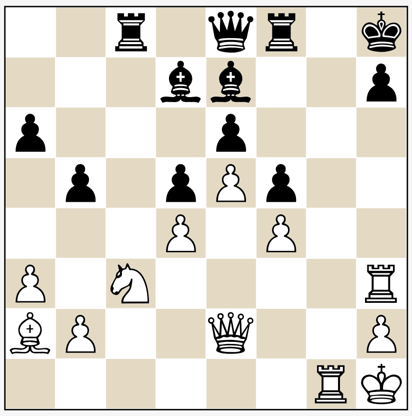
with Maxim Notkin

Find the best move in the positions below

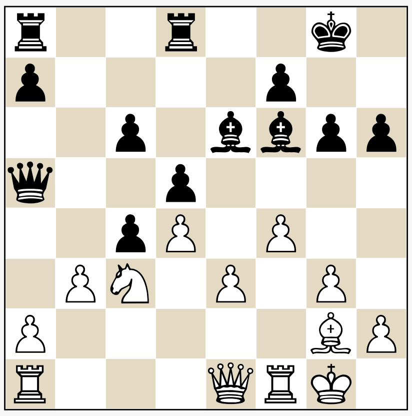
Solutions on page 61



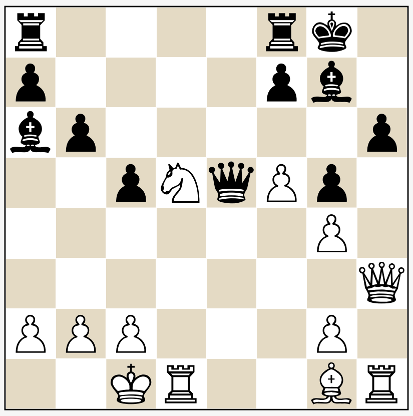
1. Black to move



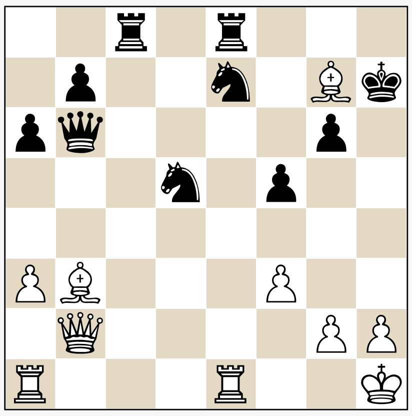
2. White to move



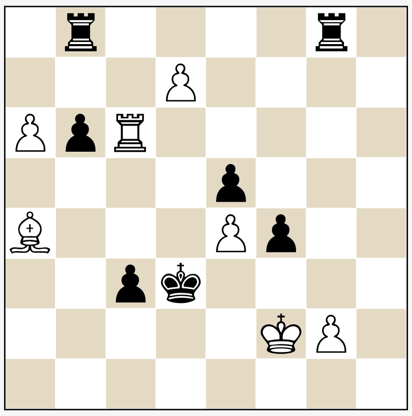
3. White to move



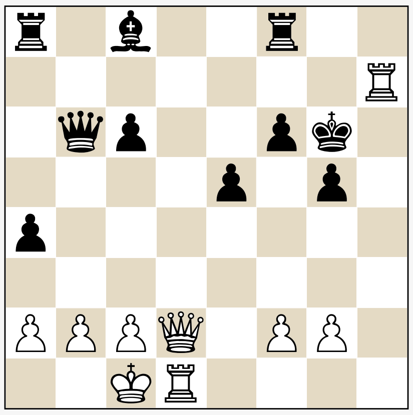
4. White to move



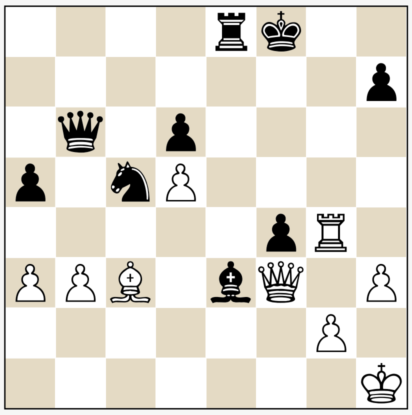
5. White to move



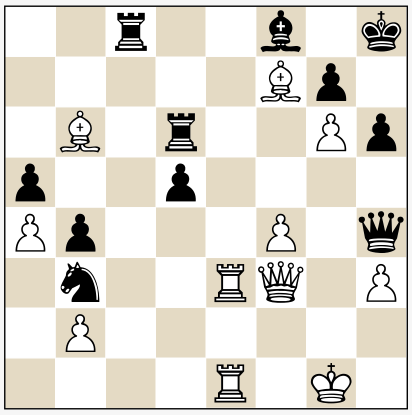
6. White to move



7. White to move



8. White to move



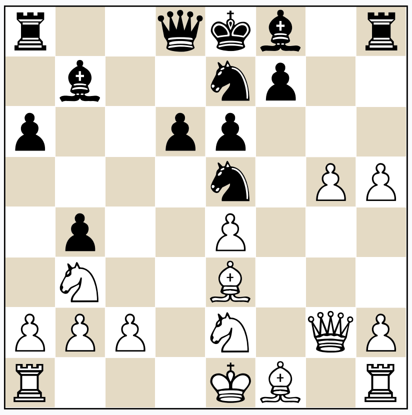
9. White to move

All of the Knight

Without any hesitation **JUDIT POLGAR** calls the knight her favourite piece. 'I have loved knights since my early childhood, and I believe this happens with most other kids, too.'

The knight is a piece with unexpected trajectories, able to deliver the most unpleasant surprises against an unaware opponent. Imagine: it is the only piece that can attack Her Majesty the Queen without being attacked by her in return!

My most memorable experience with knights is definitely the following one:



Shirov-Polgar
Buenos Aires 1994
position after 14.gxh5

I had sacrificed two pawns in order to ensure the 'best place in the stadium' for my queen's knight, but I had hidden plans for its colleague, too.

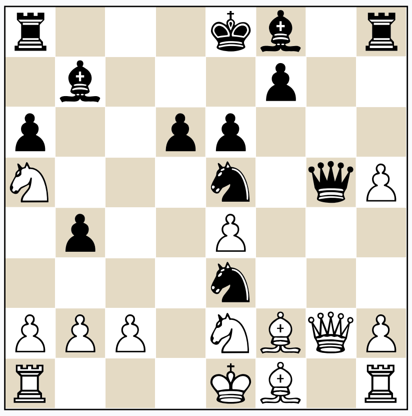
14...♘f5!

Two knights placed next to each other control a lot of important squares, and we will see that soon their area of influence will move closer to the white king.

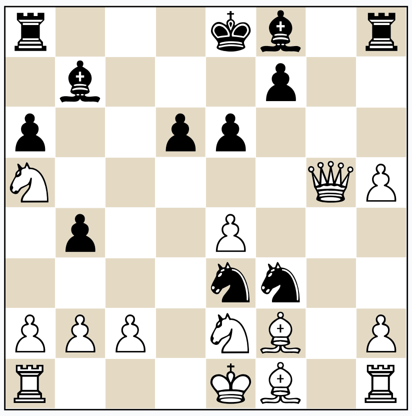
15.♗f2 ♕xg5! 16.♘a5?

After this move Shirov left the board with a happy smile. If he had anticipated my answer, he might have resigned himself to 16.♕xg5 ♘f3+ 17.♔d1 ♘xg5, with excellent chances for Black. I confess that so far I had followed my 'hand-made analysis' (there were no strong engines available yet), and only now found myself on my own. But I only needed a few minutes to find a fantastic idea.

16...♘e3!



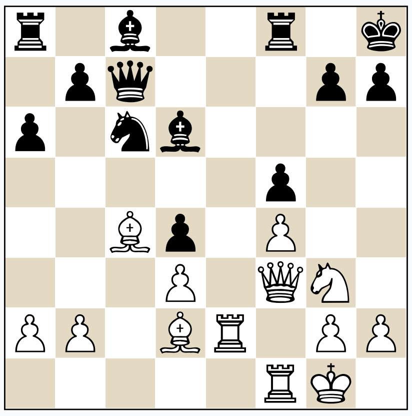
17.♕g3 Black now wins quite simply, but Shirov did not want to allow me to show any of the thematic lines: 17.♗xe3 ♕xe3 18.♘xb7 ♘f3+, mating, or the even more spectacular 17.♕xg5 ♘f3 mate.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

My cavalry needed only two moves to advance from the fifth to the third rank, with devastating effect. **17...♕xg3 18.♘xg3 ♘xc2+ 19.♔d1 ♘xa1**, and I won 10 moves later.

Despite its amazing abilities, the knight sometimes has problems accessing squares in its immediate neighbourhood, something unthinkable for other pieces. This is why the manoeuvre from the following game became one of the most famous in the whole of chess history:



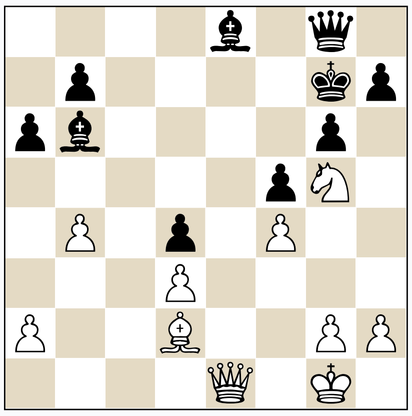
Nimzowitsch-Rubinstein
Dresden 1926
position after 17...exf5

Black's early territorial ambitions have left him with a lot of weaknesses, but as long as the knight cannot join the fight, Black can easily hold his own. Nimzowitsch identified g5 as the best square for the knight and also devised the shortest trajectory to it:

18.♘h1!! For knights, a jump backwards can be the start of a triumphant march forward.

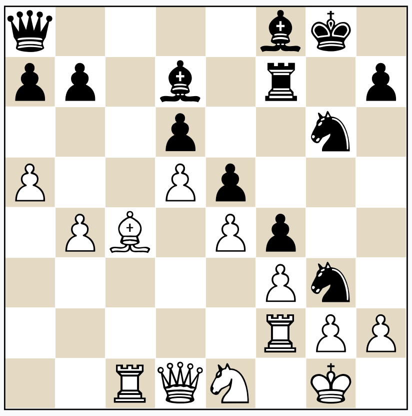
18...♗d7 19.♘f2 ♖ae8 20.♖fe1

♖xe2 21.♖xe2 ♘d8 22.♘h3 ♗c6 23.♕h5 g6 24.♕h4 ♔g7 25.♕f2 ♗c5 26.b4 ♗b6 27.♕h4
Actually, 27.♕e1, threatening 28.♖e7+, wins on the spot, but then the game would have lost part of its thematic relevance.
27...♖e8 28.♖e5 ♘f7?! 28...h6!?. **29.♗xf7 ♕xf7 30.♘g5 ♕g8 31.♖xe8 ♗xe8 32.♕e1**



Better late than never! White has an unstoppable initiative and won 14 moves later.

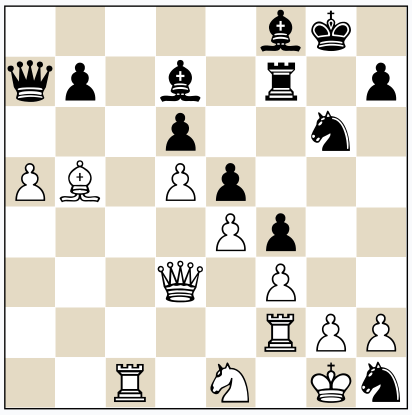
Actually, I have more vivid memories of another knight jump to the corner, one of an entirely different character.



Piket-Kasparov
Tilburg 1989
position after 25.♗c4

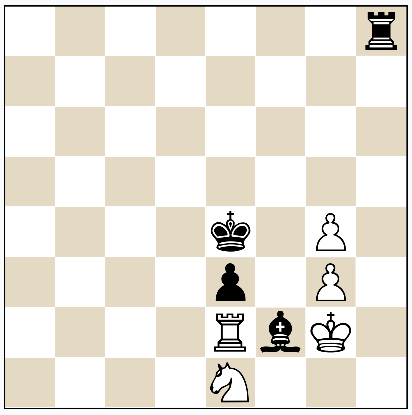
This game was played when I was on my way to become a King's Indian player. I followed Kasparov's games with interest, being invariably amazed by the way he could display his energy and ideas on practically the whole board.
25...a6!!
In this structure this move is aimed to slow down White's queenside initiative. At first sight, Black is simply defending his knight indirectly, since 26.hxg3 fxg3, followed by ...♕a7+ and ...♘f4, leads to a decisive attack. But Kasparov had even deeper plans...
26.♕d3 ♕a7 27.b5 axb5 28.♗xb5 ♘h1!

> 'Black wins an exchange by making his knight jump to the theoretically worst square on the entire board.'



What a shock! Black wins an exchange by making his knight jump to the theoretically worst square on the entire board.

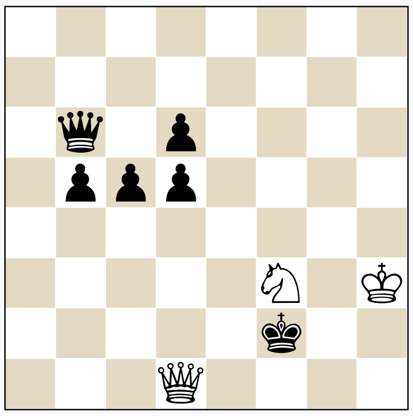
The knight's relative clumsiness can produce equally beautiful displays as its versatility. Here is a typical situation from an old training blitz game:



Palkovi-Judit Polgar
Budapest 1989

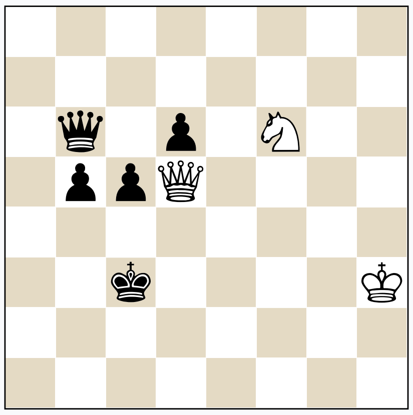
White thought **1.♖xf2?** to be the simplest way to get ready for the next game, only to resign after **1...♖h2+!** Indeed, after **2.♔xh2 exf2** the pawn queens by force. The same position without the knight would be won for White after 3.♔g2.

The knight's virtuosity is revealed in its purest form in chess studies. I used to solve a lot of studies as a child, and Kubbel was one of my favourite composers. His positions are not too difficult, but most of them are really beautiful.



L. Kubbel
White to play and win

Black has a material advantage, and even though his king is exposed, he seems to be in no danger as long as the knight does not hit his Achilles' heel on d5. But Kubbel found a way to do this...
1.♘h2 Threatening ♘g4 mate.
1...♔e3 2.♘g4+ ♔f4 Another beautiful line is 2...♔e4 3.♘f6+ ♔f5 4.♘d7, attacking the queen and threatening ♕g4 mate.
3.♕f1+ ♔e4 4.♘f6+ As if by a miracle, the knight approaches the d5-square, but it will be the queen that will occupy it first.
4...♔d4 5.♕d1+ ♔c4 6.♕xd5+ ♔c3



Is the worst over for Black?
7.♕a8! Not really! Whatever Black plays, 8.♘d5 will win the queen.
There is an echo-variation, too: 6...♔b4 7.♕a2!, with the same effect. ■

NEW IN CHESS

A

After a few mysterious, at times contradictory and not always logical statements coming from FIDE officials about the Candidates' Tournament 2016, I personally did not have much hope left to be hearing something real about this long-awaited event, which was scheduled for March next year. Indeed, deadlines have never been seen as guidelines by our flexible governing body (the first one passed on October 10th or somewhere in that region), nor were there any substantial rumours (an oxymoron?!) about the venue. My speculation about where the Candidates' Tournament might be held included cities in China, Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, the usual suspects, but even Western cities (FIDE forbid) such as Paris and San Sebastian crossed my mind. Still, the best I was hoping for was a location and dates ('wherever, whenever', as in the famous pop song) and for these to be announced by at least the beginning of the coming year.

You can imagine my surprise, then, when, going through the usual morning routine of checking my Twitter feed on the 6th of November, I discovered some tiny, yet repetitive tweets that included the name of the Armenian number one, Levon Aronian, and the well-known city of Moscow. Upon doing a further Twitter search, I #found the #information I was #looking for, including a #link (OK, by now you must have gotten #annoyed with the hashtags, so I will #stop).

All the links, long or short, pointed to the well-known website of chessdom. That website doesn't look thrilling, but as it has a direct link with FIDE and it often leaks big news (I remember how once I happily found out that I was playing the FIDE Grand Prix via this important source of information).

Later on, a micro-mini-note appeared on the FIDE website as well, even though I think there was nothing they should be embarrassed about. The tournament is to be held as planned, in March, and the sponsor is an Armenian-born billionaire worth close to five billion dollars, if we are to believe Forbes's guesswork. In fact, the sponsor, the Tashir Group, already organized a chess event once, the 2014 Petrosian Memorial, also in Moscow,

Countdown to the Candidates'

The 2016 Candidates' tournament will be held in Moscow next March and the names of all eight Candidates are known. One of them, our own **ANISH GIRI**, looks at candidates for the coveted wild card and the player who actually got it. 'In my opinion, Levon (Aronian) belongs to a category of players who are pretty narrow, but are so extremely good at it that their potential is nevertheless enormous.'

Anish Giri qualified for the Candidates' Tournament thanks to his high average rating in 2015. In Moscow he will meet Anand, Aronian, Caruana, Karjakin, Nakamura, Svidler and Topalov to decide who will challenge Magnus Carlsen at the end of 2016.

which, according to my sources, was a perfectly organized event.

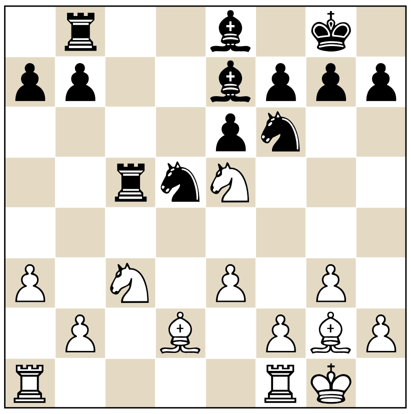
Armenians strike me as one of the most united nations (not to be confused with the birthday boy #UnitedNations). Levon's Armenian fans always find their hero in whatever city he plays and always show up to support him, like minions rushing to the biggest villains (those who know what I am talking about know this is absolutely *not* an offensive comparison). Therefore it was absolutely logical that Samvel Karpetyan, the head of the Tashir Group, although he has been based in Russia from back in the famous 90s, has chosen to give the desired wild card spot to his Armenian compatriot and not to a Russian player, which would be natural given the location and an abundance of worthy candidates. Once the news had been published on websites with a chat function, the trolling could begin: is Levon actually the best wild card we can think of? Wouldn't it be great if 'X' had played instead? The names of Kramnik, Grischuk, So, Ding Liren and Wei Yi came up and here I would like to contribute to the discussion and give my own take on the matter, knowing that ultimately such questions can never be answered correctly.

The highest rated (at the moment) amongst the non-qualified players is the one and only Vladimir 'Big Vlad' Kramnik. First of all, why hasn't he already qualified? Well, to begin with, we can forget about the FIDE Grand Prix, which he didn't play in. Vladimir even turned down an invitation to take part in the Grand Chess Tour despite a very, very decent prize-fund to say it the British way. The Grand Prix series with a first prize of around 20,000 dollars simply does not satisfy the financial demands of the legendary Russian (the same, by the way, goes for Levon Aronian). Another direct road to the Candidates' is the World Cup, where both finalists qualify. But that's one shot and it went badly for him, as you could see in the previous issue. Which left rating, as two players qualify for the Candidates' based on their average rating on the 2015 rating lists. Apparently, Big Vlad was keeping a close eye on that possibility and from inside sources I heard that he even took big risks to get ahead in this race during the tournament in Dortmund this summer. That led to few painful losses and a bad event on home soil (the Russian has won Dortmund an insane amount of times, and the organizers worship him there) and rather bleak chances to qualify in this manner. And indeed, in the last event I played before the moment of truth on December 1st, the European Teams in Iceland, I did not spoil the comfortable lead I had over the 40-year-old 'Veteran' and claimed the second 'rating spot' (besides Veselin Topalov) in the Candidates'. Overall, this year it looked as if Big Vlad was on his way to retirement, but then lightning struck and he won four games in a row at the European Club Cup in Skopje, Macedonia, winning close to 20 rating points. I have to admit that his wins against Nepo, Topalov and Svidler were indeed impressive, but Ivanchuk was definitely in Santa Claus mode on the day they played. And so, when the Club Cup was won by the Russian team of Siberia (our SOCAR finished second), I thought that maybe SberBank would find enough money in its reserves to stage the Candidates'. But as we now know, that didn't happen. Would Big Vlad have made a good wildcard? Hell yeah! In this issue he himself comments on his win against Veselin Topalov. Let's have a look here at his win against Peter Svidler.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

CA 4.2 – E06
Peter Svidler
Vladimir Kramnik
Skopje 2015 (4)

1.c4 e6 2.♘c3 d5 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘f3 ♗e7 5.g3 0-0 6.♗g2 dxc4 7.♘e5 ♕d6 8.♘xc4 ♕a6 9.♕b3 ♘c6 10.e3 ♖b8 11.♕b5 ♕xb5 12.♘xb5 ♘b4 13.0-0 ♗d7 14.♘c3 ♖fc8 15.a3 ♘bd5 16.♗d2 c5 17.dxc5 ♖xc5 18.♘e5 ♗e8

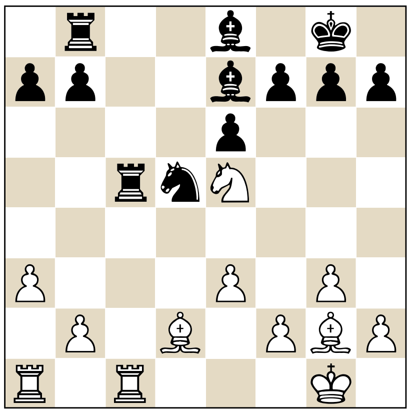


Svidler has been under pressure from the opening, when it turned out that he had missed an important idea in his preparation. On the board, though, not much has been happening, and here White is as comfortable as Black. But the clock was ticking and Big Vlad was sitting on the edge of his chair. And Peter erred.

19.♘xd5 An interesting alternative was 19.♘d3!? ♖c4 20.♘xd5 ♘xd5 21.♗xd5 exd5 22.♗c3.

19...♘xd5 20.♖fc1?!

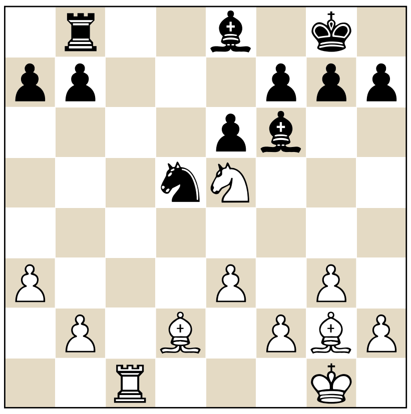
Instead, 19.♘d3 or 20.♖fd1 were perfect alternatives. The symmetry would possibly be broken, but looking for simplifications backfires surprisingly quickly.



20...♖xc1+! Probably, 20...♖bc8 21.♖xc5 ♖xc5 22.♖c1 was Peter's plan.

21.♖xc1 ♗f6!

Suddenly some questions are being asked. The c-file isn't important and soon White might experience some problems on the d-file.

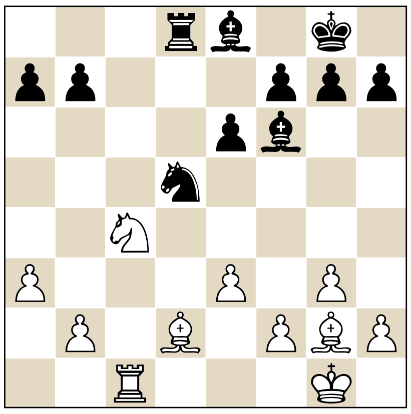


22.♘c4

22.f4 is not a move you make when you dream of retaining the symmetry. The (soon to become) doubled e-pawns might cause problems in the long run. However, White is quite well coordinated at the moment, so objectively it was worth considering.

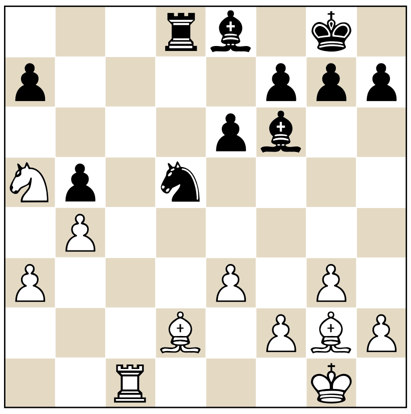
On the other hand, 22.♘d3 ♖d8 is worrisome, as the knight on d3 isn't stable.

22...♖d8



23.b4 23.e4 looks ugly: 23...♘b6!.

23...b5 24.♘a5



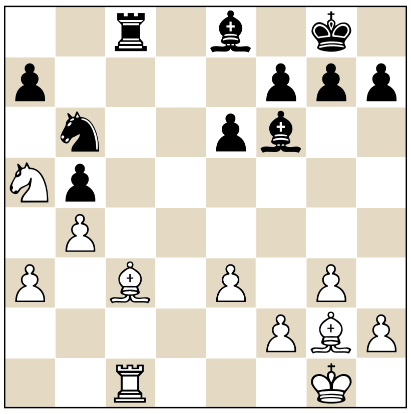
24...♘b6! Not going for the unattractive pawns with 24...♗b2?! 25.♖b1 ♗xa3 26.♘b7! ♖d7 27.♘c5 ♖d8 28.♗e1!?.

25.♗c3?!

Forcing matters is common for the

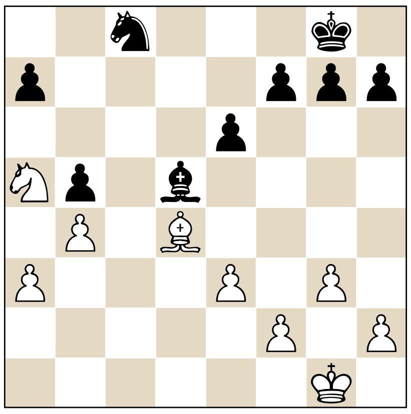
defender, who tends to lose patience when under nagging pressure. 25.♖c2 ♘c4 26.♗c1! looks very ugly, but it seems that White maintains the balance: 26...♖d1+ 27.♗f1 ♘xa5 28.bxa5 ♗d8 29.♖d2 ♖xd2 30.♗xd2, with a drawn endgame.

25...♖c8



26.♗c6 I would have taken the last exit – which was 26.♗d2!? ♗b2 27.♖xc8 ♘xc8 28.♘c6, and the a3-pawn is never juicy, as White will reply ♗c3, half trapping the bishop. I don't think much is going on here, though of course only Black can be better and the game is far from over: 28...e5!? 29.♔f1 f5!?.

26...♗xc6 27.♗xf6 ♗d5 28.♖xc8+ ♘xc8 29.♗d4



Now the position has stabilized. The knight on a5 is dominated. I have won a similar endgame against Andrei Volokitin, which went surprisingly easily. It is really hard to play when you know you are practically down a piece. With precise defending, such a position is most likely tenable, but this being a real game, I felt bad for Peter here.

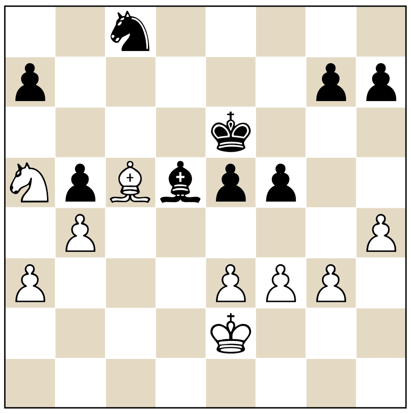
29...f6

> ‘White is as comfortable as Black. But the clock was ticking and Big Vlad was sitting on the edge of his chair. And Peter erred.’

For a player with a deep understanding it is natural not to commit with ...a6, keeping the option of ...♘b6, but I am sure many people wouldn't notice this subtlety.

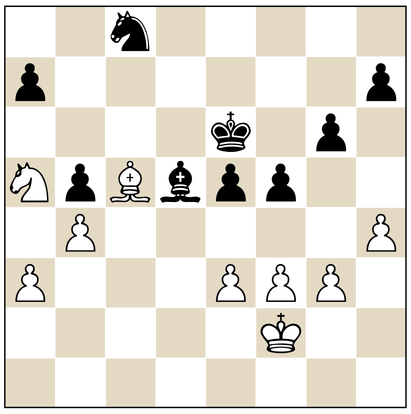
30.♗c5 ♔f7 31.♔f1 e5 32.♔e2 ♔e6 33.f3 f5 34.h4

I would consider giving up all the light squares but try to lock the position with 34.f4, without worrying about weak pawns.



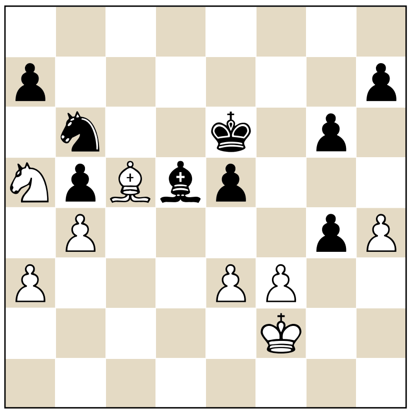
34...g6 35.♔f2

This felt very wrong. It was tempting to go 35.f4 and keep the king closer to the queenside in order to retain the option of the knight eventually coming back via b3.



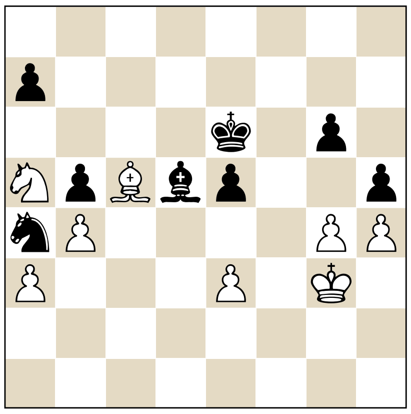
35...♘b6! Considering Peter's reply, this move came just in time. The knight can only be activated at the cost of the a7-pawn, so there is no need for White to panic. Also, the d5-bishop can't move without allowing the a5-knight to come back into the game. Add these two facts together and you will realize that White isn't actually doomed at all. 36.f4 here, and the game should end in a draw.

36.g4? There is a word for this, and the word is: panic. 36.f4! ♘a4 37.♗xa7 ♘c3 38.♗b8, and White holds. **36...fxg4**



37.fxg4 I actually thought that Peter was very deep and was trying to set up a fortress by giving up a pawn: 37.e4!? ♗a8 38.♘b3 gxf3 39.♔xf3, and this position might actually prove to be a very hard nut to crack.

37...h5!? 38.♔g3 ♘a4!? A nice concept. The a7-pawn is not crucial.

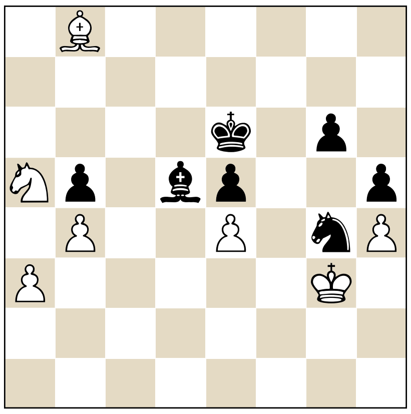


39.♗xa7 ♘c3 40.♗b8??

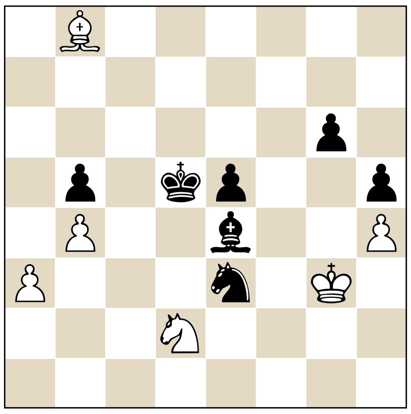
Collapse. Now Black picks up the juiciest pawn, while the knight is still smoking on a5 (a Russian expression both these players will be familiar with).

40.gxh5 gxh5 41.♔f2 looks really bad

as well, but in fact it might be holdable: 41...♔f5 42.♗b6 ♔e4 43.♗c7. **40...♘e4+ 41.♔h3 ♘f2+ 42.♔g3 ♘xg4 43.e4** Two juicy pawns is too much, even for the sake of reviving the piece.



43...♗xe4 44.♘b3 ♔d5 45.♘d2 ♘e3!



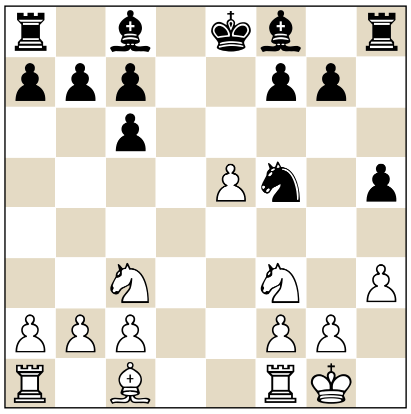
This reminds me a bit of the mechanism you use to mate the bare king with knight and bishop. The knight gets transferred to a position from where it dominates the king. The h4-pawn falls as well. Svidler has resigned in many much better positions than this one. White resigned.

■ ■ ■

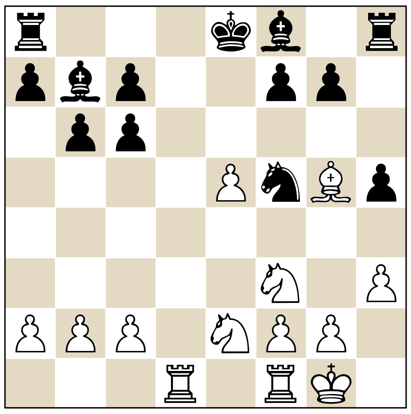
Alexander Grischuk started the year on a high with his rating in the stratospheric 2800 Club. As in the best spirit of classical literature, the imaginary novel on his 2015-2016 World Championship cycle came full circle when his last hopes were dashed by the Tashir Group giving the wild card to Levon. The same Tashir Group that sponsored the 2014 Petrosian Memorial which Grischuk won in impressive fashion, and where he crossed the 2800 barrier by a comfortable margin. Since then Alexander has had a very rough downfall, losing over 50 rating points spread over the year. Frankly speaking, I don't think he himself was too interested in getting the wild card, principled fighter that he is. Moreover, none of the 'experts' I know considered him a real candidate for the wild card. Nonetheless, when the city of Moscow was mentioned, many Russian fans were asking themselves whether Grischuk, being a Muscovite, was not the best candidate for the job. They also remembered how two years ago in Khanty the wild card was given to Peter Svidler and not to Alexander, who was just as worthy. Oh well, he will be back with a vengeance. And with some time-trouble too! Here's a recent win by Grischuk from the European Club Cup, which was won by the team he represented, Siberia, from the match against defending champions SOCAR. One game is not a reason to start talking about a comeback, but it was an impressive game nonetheless.

RL 7.4 – C67
Alexander Grischuk
Fabiano Caruana
Skopje 2015 (5)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.0-0 ♘xe4 5.d4 ♘d6 6.♗xc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 ♘f5 8.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 9.♘c3 ♔e8 10.h3 h5
The tabiya of the Berlin endgame with ...♔e8.



11.♘e2 b6 12.♗g5!? A novelty intended to confuse Fabiano.
12...♗b7 13.♖ad1



13...♗e7?!
According to Michael Adams, you have to go ...c5 here. The machine shouts the same. Pick your authority.

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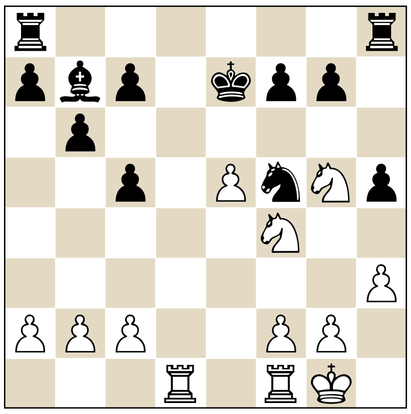
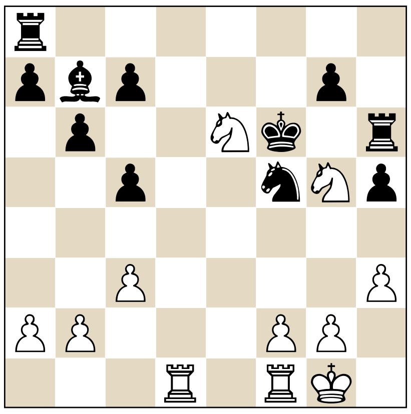
13...c5! 14.♘c3 ♗xf3 15.gxf3 (doubling the f-pawns is an idea Fabiano knew about and I knew that he knew, since he had tried to use it against me in the same Berlin endgame in London last year) 15...c6! (15...♘d4 16.♘d5 bothered Fabiano, but it's far from clear; in fact Black seems to be doing alright here, too, after 16...♔d7).
14.♗xe7 ♔xe7 15.♘f4 c5 16.♘g5

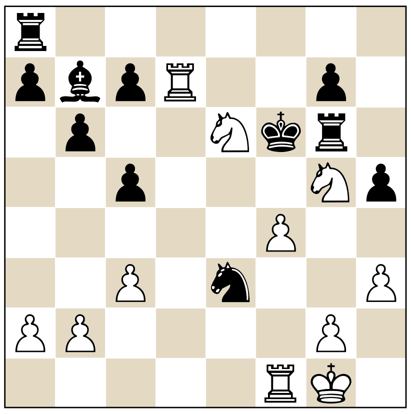


16...♖h6? A mistake caused by too much knowledge. Fabiano must have confused the lines here, as this looks like a position from the game Cheparinov-Navara, where David drew confidently. In fact, I also struggled to see the difference at first, but after a while it dawned upon me that White has the 'right' rook on d1 here, while in the other line White had to play ♖fd1. Subtle as it looks, it drastically changes the evaluation of the position.
17.c3! A standard move in this situation, guarding the d4-square against the knight.
17...f6 18.exf6+ ♔xf6 19.♘fe6
Here Fabiano realized that something was wrong, but strangely enough, it was already too late...

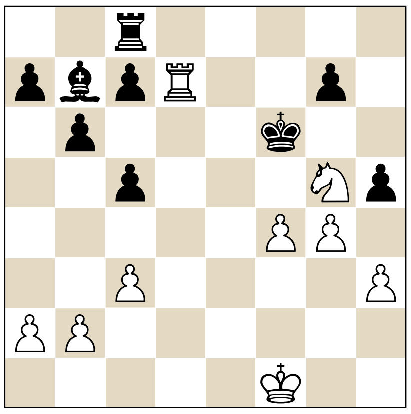


> 'According to Michael Adams, you have to go ...c5 here. The machine shouts the same. Pick your authority.'

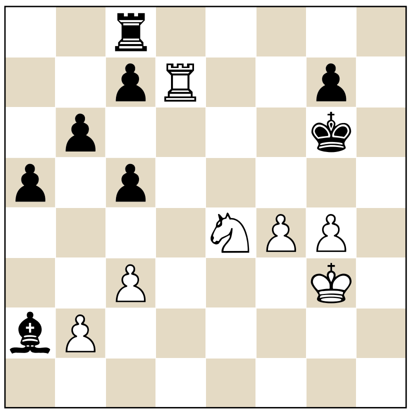
19...♖g6 ... because 19...♖e8, as played by Navara against Cheparinov in a similar position, can now be met by 20.♖fe1! ♗c8 21.♘e4+!, and White wins.
20.f4 ♘e3 21.♖d7



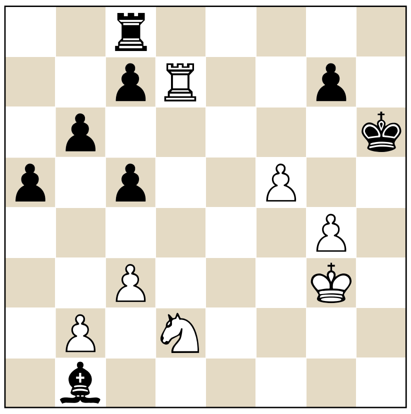
Saying hi! to the king.
21...♖xg5
The only move, otherwise 22.♖f7+ would be deadly.
22.♘xg5 ♘xf1 23.♔xf1 ♖c8 24.g4 This endgame looks absolutely hopeless. Fabiano gets to steal the a2-pawn, but the queenside majority is far too slow while on the kingside Black is almost mated.



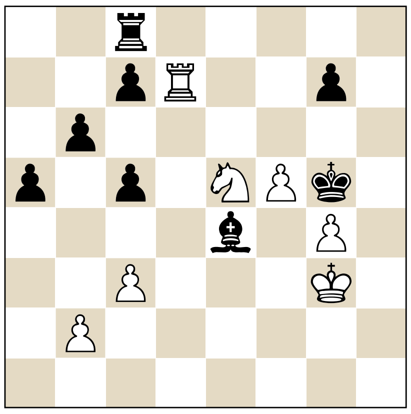
24...hxg4 25.hxg4 ♗c6 26.♖f7+ ♔g6 27.♔f2 ♗d5 28.♖d7 ♗xa2 29.♔g3 a5 30.♘e4



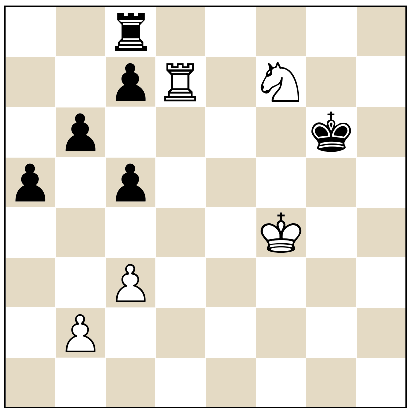
Preparing f5+. White's position plays itself, but it takes a great master behind the pieces for it to appear this way.
30...♗b1 31.f5+ ♔h6 32.♘d2!
A deadly regrouping.



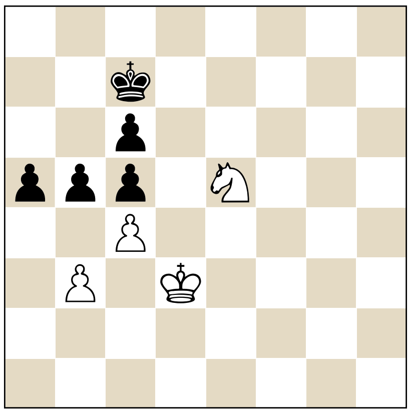
32...♗c2 33.♘f3 ♗e4 34.♘e5 ♔g5



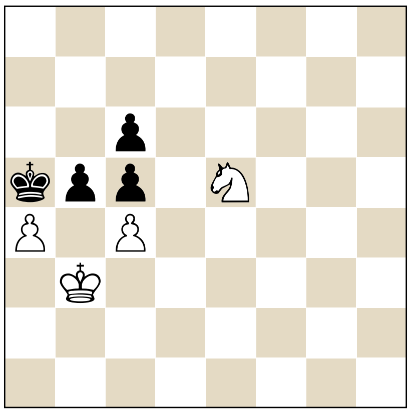
The last chance for Fabiano.
35.♘f7+ ♔f6 36.♔f4 ♗xf5 37.gxf5 g6 38.fxg6 ♔xg6
Here, if the black king had been on c6 and the rook on h1, we would have had a position from the last World Championship match Carlsen-Anand. This is very different, though, and here White has many ways to win.



39.♖d8
Quite sophisticated, but it wins, so I am not going to criticize it.
39.♔e4 ♔f6 40.♘e5 ♔e6 41.♖h7, followed by ♖h6+ and ♔d5, would have been more straightforward.
39...♖xd8 40.♘xd8 ♔f6 41.c4 ♔e7 42.♘c6+ ♔d6 43.♘e5 b5 44.♔e4 c6 45.b3 ♔c7 46.♔d3



46...a4 This loses, but so does waiting. Eventually, White will transfer the knight to e4 and the c5-pawn will fall. After that it will a be trivial win: 46...♔d6 47.♘f3 ♔c7 48.♘g5 ♔b6 49.♘e4 a4 50.bxa4 ♔a5 51.♘c3, and White wins.
47.bxa4 ♔b6 48.♔c3 ♔a5 49.♔b3!



Black resigned.

Not bad, to beat Fabiano in the Berlin. But bad, in fact, for us, the team of SOCAR, since this game had a clear effect on the outcome of the European Club Cup.

■ ■ ■

Rumour had it that the United States might host the Candidates' tournament. Fabiano and Hikaru (or Hikaru and Fabiano – you don't want to get them angry, their relations must be quite tense!) had already qualified from the Grand Prix cycle, so next in line would be Wesley So, another top-10 player. Wesley seems a very mysterious young man to me. I have absolutely no idea what he is up to and to get into his head seems to be an impossible task. That said, the only relevant thing is that he is an excellent player. When in shape it is quite hard to beat him. Scary he is definitely not, but neither does he fear anyone. Well-prepared and young, he would fit in harmoniously in the company that will gather in Moscow (or would have gathered in America). However, any experienced chess follower would have sensed already that there were bad signs for the American fans that hoped for a third American in the Candidates'. First of all, the main chess philanthropist, Rex Sinquefield, would probably be reluctant to pay 20 per cent of the prize-fund to the FIDE he wanted Kasparov to overthrow. Secondly, the FIDE president had announced that the Candidates' Tournament was likely to take place in the States. No idea why he does it, must be some clever political thingy, but usually the things he says and the things that happen are opposites.

'The feeling of unity gifted to them by birth by the Communist People's Republic of China gives them a boost in team events.'

The Chinese, though, seem to have some ambitions. Fooled by their great results in team events, the national coach of China has already promised us a Chinese World Champion in the foreseeable future (I believe he went as far as setting a deadline, like 2018 or so). I am very captivated by the culture, the spectacular playing style and fighting spirit of my Chinese colleagues. The feeling of unity gifted to them by birth by the Communist People's Republic of China gives them a boost in team events. That said, on a bad day their opening preparation can be naive, their understanding incomplete and their calculation rather spontaneous. Ding Liren has reached the top-10, but apart from the fact that he is a creative genius, he is still clearly lacking the stability to be considered the best Earth has to offer. Wei Yi has people praying to and for him, but the teenager will have to grow up and mature, just like all his colleagues. However, here we are not speaking about world domination, but about a shot at the Candidates' tournament, which they could have had by staging the tournament in China. There, a representative from China would have been a great addition, attracting a whole new and a rather large crowd. In that case I would have had to see how I could have solved my intolerance to Chinese food (don't be fooled, my European Chinese food lovers, the food in China is pretty different from what you get in your average Chinese restaurant around the corner, which I love as well!), but the Candidates' in China would have overall been a funky idea.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

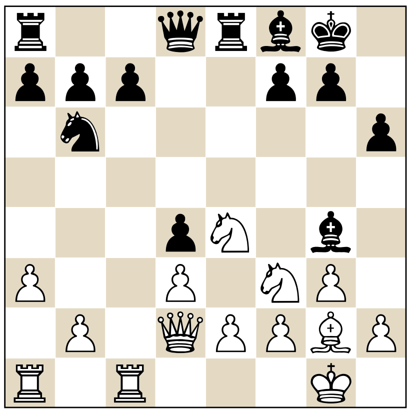
‘When discussing positions with Levon, you have to be aware that the crucial element in the debate about assessing a position is the side of the board represented by the Armenian wizard.’

Now, what about the hero of our story, the Armenian wizard Aronian? In my opinion, Levon belongs to a category of players who are pretty narrow, but are so extremely good at it, that their potential is still enormous (think Arjen Robben – oh well, not the best time to speak about Dutch football). The same (once again purely my opinion) cannot be said about, for example, Vladimir Kramnik or Vishy Anand. They are players with a much more universal style and far more flexible understanding (from the young generation Caruana and Nakamura come to mind). Having lost a bunch of great (not on my part!) games to Levon version 2010 (a great player from the past!), I believe I know what his strong sides were. In his recent interviews, when asked about his (ongoing?!) crisis, Levon said something I absolutely fail to understand. I hope for him that he is trying to fool around, which would be very much like him. Still, I doubt whether he quite wants to analyse himself objectively and see what the old Levon had that the new one doesn't. Self-criticism is a rare quality, which can sometimes be rather self-limiting as well. Nonetheless, Levon won the super-strong Saint Louis tournament and got some hope back. He definitely deserves a second chance and now, thanks to the Tashir Group, he has got it. Let's see what he will do, but if you will excuse me I will not root for my rivals. Here's a game of his from St. Louis that I would like to have another look at.

EO 3.6 – A29

Levon Aronian
Anish Giri
St. Louis 2015 (3)

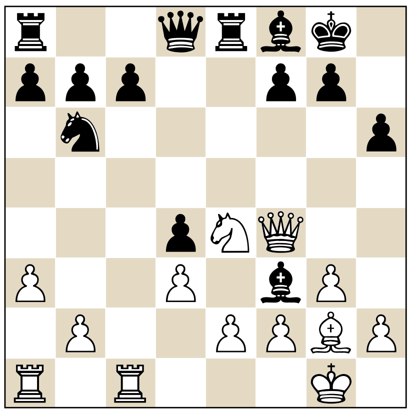
1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♗g2 ♘b6 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.d3 0-0 9.♗e3 ♖e8 10.♕d2 ♗f8 11.♖fc1 h6 12.a3 ♗g4 13.♘e4 ♘d4 14.♗xd4 exd4



This is an approximately balanced position. On the day the game was played, Levon said that White had a huge advantage. When discussing positions with Levon, you have to be aware that the crucial element in the debate about assessing a position is the side of the board represented by the Armenian wizard. But then again, there is a lot to be learned from this approach.

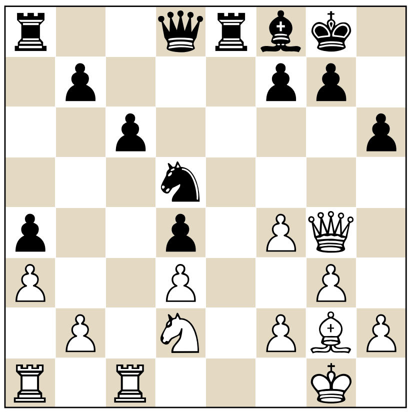
15.♕f4 I thought I would have to take on f3 anyway. 15.b4 is more to the point, as I see it, trying to get some positional foothold on the queenside before Black can consolidate his superiority on that flank.

15...♗xf3



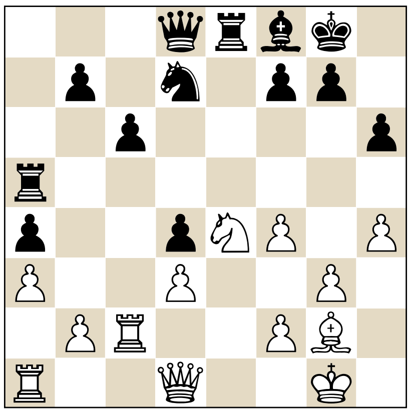
16.exf3! I was extremely frustrated, knowing how proud Levon was about this standard non-standard move. Indeed, he couldn't resist and went into the brand new Grand Chess Tour invention: the confessional booth! With the text-move White gets rid of the backward e2-pawn, but his pawn ‘majority’ on the kingside is not enough to pose any problems there. On the queenside he is blocked.

16...♘d5 17.♕g4 c6 18.f4 a5 19.♘d2 a4



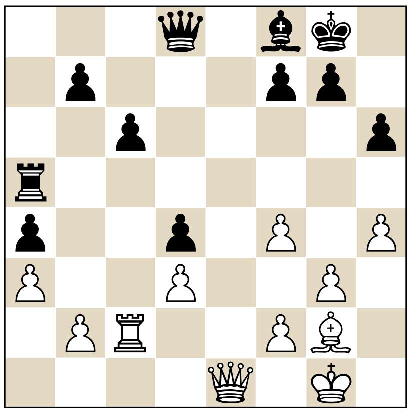
My last few moves are very natural. Now both sides are pretty much out of plan and we start moving back and forth.

20.♕d1 ♘b6 21.h4 ♖a5 22.♖c2 ♘d7 23.♘e4 I thought Levon was fishing for a draw. So I thought: why not?



23...♘c5 24.♘xc5 ♗xc5 25.♕d2 Here I didn't take time to find a way to end the game right away.

25...♗f8 26.♖e1 ♖xe1+ 27.♕xe1

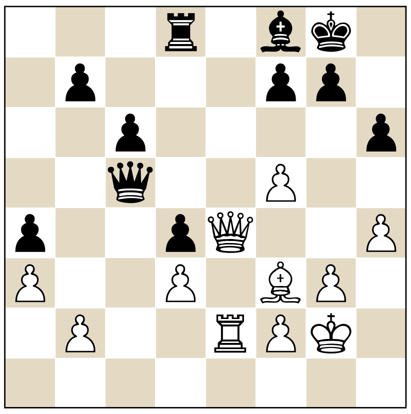


27...♖a8? The rook had to be on the 5th rank, attacking the b2-pawn and making sure White would be unable to activate his heavy artillery. I had a very strange plan: getting my rook to e7, which is a bit embarrassing. 27...♖b5 28.♖e2 ♕a5 29.♕d1 g6 30.♗f3 h5, and nothing will ever happen in this position.

28.♕e4 ♕b6 29.♖e2 ♕c5 30.♗f3 ♖d8 31.♔g2 ♗d6 Around here I realized that I had messed up and that the best I could do was just sit and wait. My position is still quite tight, after all.

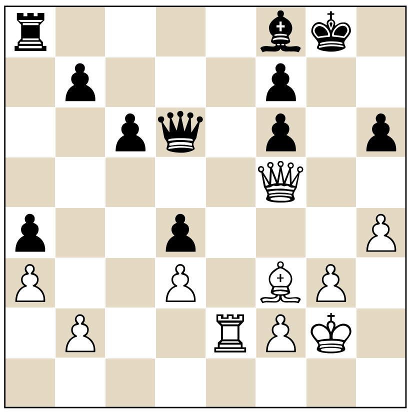
31...♖d7? 32.♕e8 ♖e7 33.♖xe7 ♕xe7 34.♕a8! is awful. I think this is what I must have overlooked when going for the passive plan.

32.f5 ♗f8



33.f6!? This move confused me, but in fact it's the best way to exert some pressure. Now Black has to keep his position together with many pawns requiring some attention. Fortunately, I was able to get myself together and start working hard.

33...gxf6 34.♕f4 ♕d6 35.♕f5 ♖a8! Don't be confused; the real weakness is the a4-pawn.

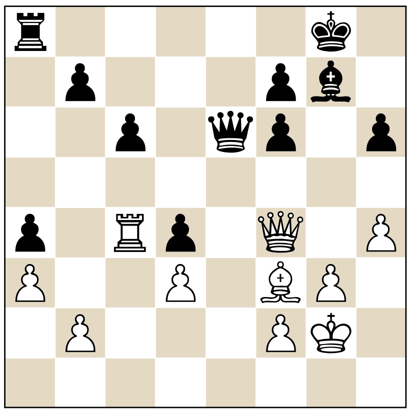


36.♖c2 This was unpleasant, but again I managed to make a few ugly but tight moves.

36.♖e4 ♗g7 37.♖g4 ♕e6! holds just in time.

36.♗e4 is going into the wrong direction: 36...♗g7 37.♕h7+ ♔f8 38.♗f5 ♕d5+ 39.f3 ♖a5!.

36...♗g7 37.♖c4 ♕e6! 38.♕f4



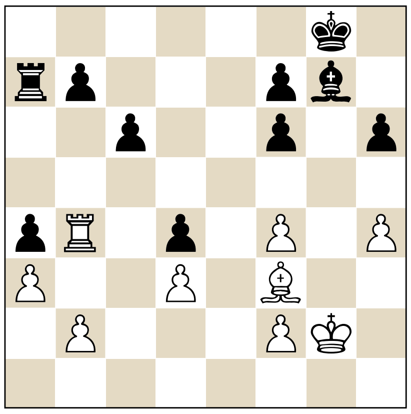
38...♕e5! 38...f5 runs into 39.♖c5.

39.♖b4

Too clever. I had some doubts, but after spending some time I realized that there was nothing to fear.

39.♕c1 was his best shot, but now, after 39...♖a5 40.♕d1 f5 41.♖xa4 ♗f6, White will have regained his pawn – a better one, in fact. In the meantime, however, Black will have managed to get his kingside into decent shape. I think this position will be easy to hold, especially considering the trend of the game.

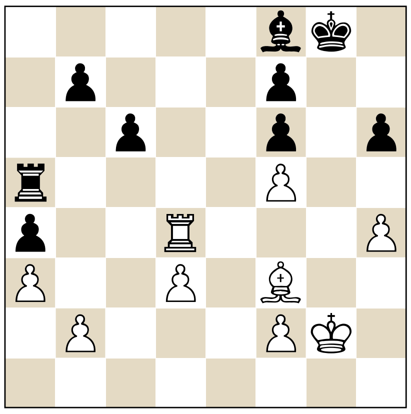
39...♕xf4 40.gxf4 ♖a7



41.f5

Or 41.♖xd4 f5 42.♖d8+ ♔h7 43.d4 ♖a5 with counterplay and full equality.

41...♗f8 42.♖xd4 ♖a5



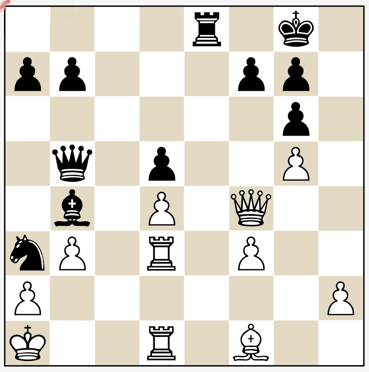
And, realizing that going for the f7-pawn wouldn't yield anything more than an eventual perpetual, Levon agreed to a draw.

You might argue that the game wasn't special or exciting, and I would agree, but the way the Armenian perceived the game and the fact that he was able to exert some pressure is both amusing and instructive. ■

NEW IN CHESS * TRAINING *

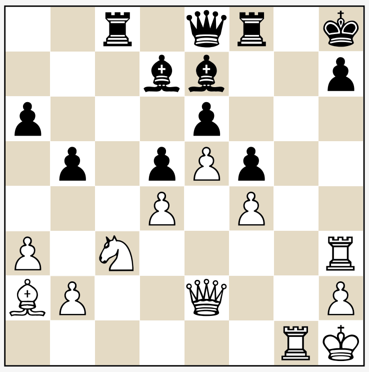
MAXIMize your Tactics

Solutions



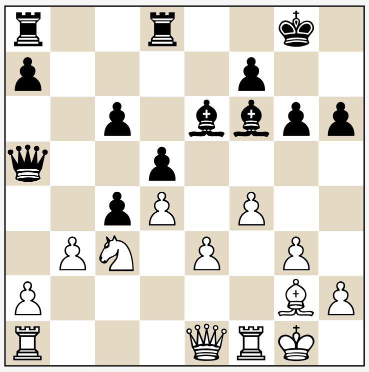
1. Bartell-Stripunsky
United States tt 2015

28...♕xd3! Mating after both 29.♗xd3 ♗c3+ and 29.♖xd3 ♖e1+ 30.♔b2 ♖b1+. White resigned.



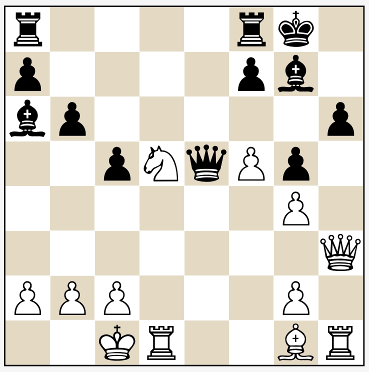
2. Navara-Matuszewski
Poland tt 2015

30.♖xh7+! ♔xh7 31.♕g2 Despite being located nearby their king, three black pieces are unable to cover the vital squares. Black resigned.



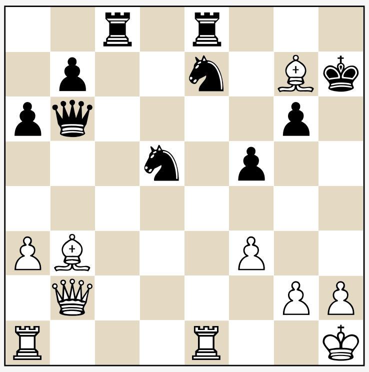
3. Williams-Morris
Skopje 2015

17.f5! gxf5 17...♗xf5 18.♘e4 ♕xe1 19.♘xf6+ ♔g7 20.♖axe1 ♔xf6 21.g4. **18.♘e4** After 18...♕xe1 19.♘xf6+ ♔g7 20.♘h5+ ♔g6 21.♘f4+ Black doesn't regain a piece, so he resigned.



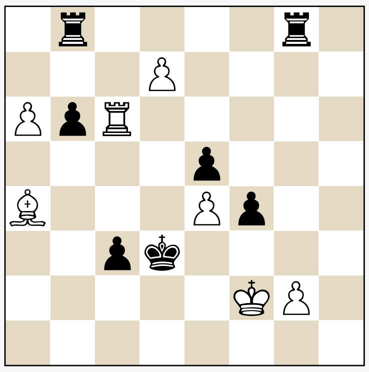
4. Ninov-Colovic
Kragujevac 2015

22.f6! ♗xf6 23.♗d4! Vigorously protecting the pawn on b2 while the pawn on h6 is now deprived of protection. After both 23...cxd4 or 23...♕xd5 White plays 24.♕xh6 and mate is coming.



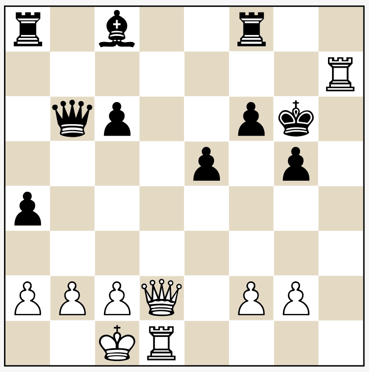
5. Bodnaruk-Gunina
Skopje 2015

31.♗h8! ♖xh8 32.♖xe7+ In case of 32...♘xe7 White sends another bishop to the 8th rank: 33.♗g8+!, winning the queen! Black preferred to give up a piece by **32...♔h6 33.♕d2+** and resigned shortly after.



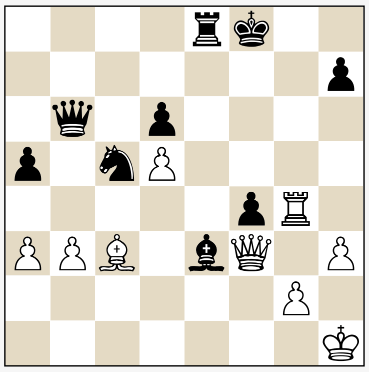
6. Degtiarev-Istratescu
Switzerland 2015

50.♗b3! c2 This isn't a blunder, as the natural and desirable 50...♖gd8 runs into 51.♖d6+ ♔xe4 (the king has been deprived of the c4-square) 52.♗c2 mate! **51.♗xg8 ♖xg8 52.♖c8** Black resigned.



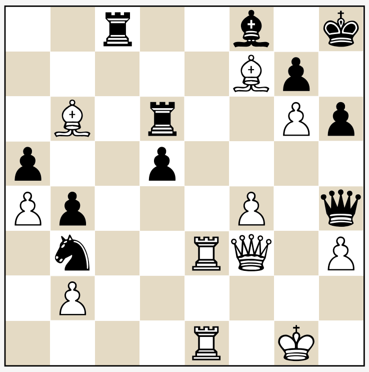
7. Ismagambetov-Wen Yang
Zaozhuang 2012

The black king was neatly wrapped up with the brilliant **23.♕d3+ ♗f5** 23...e4 24.♕xe4+ ♗f5 25.♕e7 or 23...f5 24.♖dh1 don't help either. **24.♖dh1! ♗xd3 25.g4!!** And Black resigned.



8. Turutin-Belous
Moscow 2013

33.♖g8+! ♔e7 Not 33...♔xg8 34.♕g4+ ♔f7 35.♕g7 mate. **34.♖g7+ ♔d8** If 34...♔f8 35.♕h5, mating. Now it may seem that the black king escapes. **35.♕g4 ♖f8** Parrying the threat of ♗f6+. **36.♗e1!! ♗d4 37.♗h4+ ♗f6 38.♕f5!** Black resigned.



9. Harikrishna-Efimenko
Germany tt 2013

37.♖e8! ♖xb6 38.♖xc8 ♕xe1+ 39.♔g2 ♕e7 39...♕d2+ 40.♔f1 and White takes over. **40.♕e3!** A triple attack formally. **40...♖xg6+** 40...♕d6 41.♕xb6. **41.♗xg6 ♕f6 42.f5** Black resigned.

Parimarjan's Chess Gym

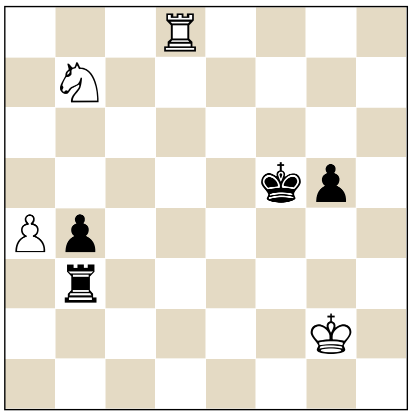
The Downward Spiral

Mistakes rarely come alone, because they upset you. But it's often only the subsequent mistakes that actually lead to a loss. **Parimarjan Negi** tells you how you can keep your game from spinning out of control.

This article was inspired by a chapter from Josh Waitzkin's excellent book, *The Art of Learning*. While the publishers may have overblown Josh's chess achievements, his experiences were more than enough to vividly bring to life several wonderful psychological parallels between playing chess, doing Tai-chi and trying to get better at anything else in life.

Unlike Josh, I'll use more chess-centric examples to describe the idea of 'the downward spiral'. Imagine you're playing confidently, and everything is going nicely, but suddenly you make that one careless move. Of course, your opponent spots the mistake immediately and he executes his obvious reply. You aren't sure about the new position – it seems kind of unclear – but you can no longer focus on it. After all, how could you? Just one move back, things were so good. Why couldn't you have thought for a little bit longer? Will you ever learn your lesson? Maybe you will spend a while cursing yourself, just wishing for a magical switch to turn the time around. But you can't stop playing now, so you make another move, before going back to the world of what-ifs, and calculating all the good lines that you missed. And then, before you know it, the game has completely turned around and you blame it all on that one mistake as your struggle to put up some – any – resistance.

After the game, maybe with the help of an engine, you realize that even after that mistake your position was still good enough. It was actually good enough for a long time, but you were no longer looking for the good moves – the idea of having missed something obvious had paralyzed your thoughts and you ended up making another gazillion mistakes that didn't need to be made at all. I have played too many games like that.



Negi-Georgiev
Wijk aan Zee 2005
position after 66...♖xb3

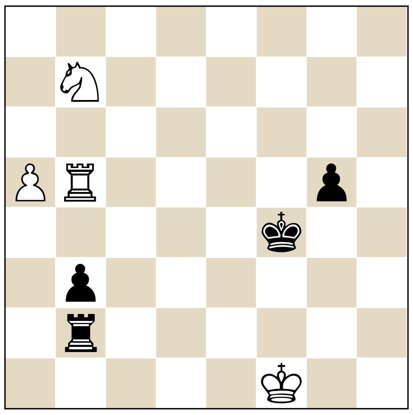
I had been winning for almost the entire game, but never quite managed to finish him off.

67.♖d5+ ♔f4 68.a5? Completely underestimating Black's counterplay.

At the very least, it made a lot of sense to play the obvious 68.♖d4+, which forces the black king into an uncomfortable situation, as 68...♔e3 can be met by 69.♖g4. In addition, Black will be unable to force the king on g2 back with ...♖b2+. I was already berating myself about messing up an easy win as the next moves were played: **68...♖b2+**

Being forced to play the king to the first rank was far from ideal...

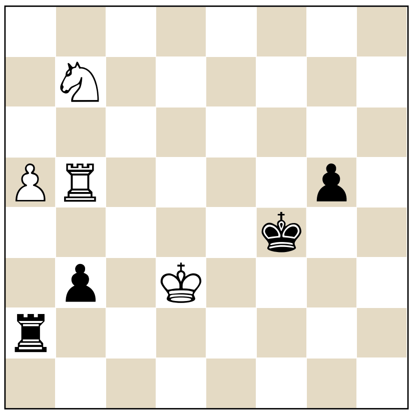
69.♔f1 b3! 70.♖b5



70...♖b1+?

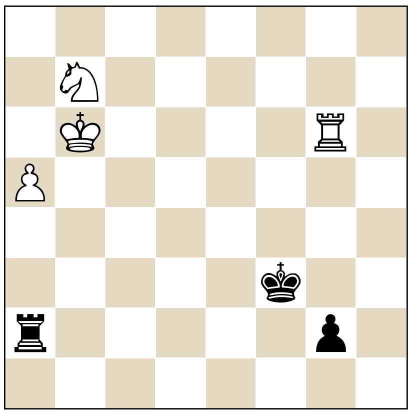
Now, it's his turn to go wrong. Black shouldn't have allowed the white king to become active. 70...♔f3 holds quite easily, since the king + g-pawn combo is becoming very strong. Getting the king out was such a relief...

71.♔e2 ♖b2+ 72.♔d3 ♖a2



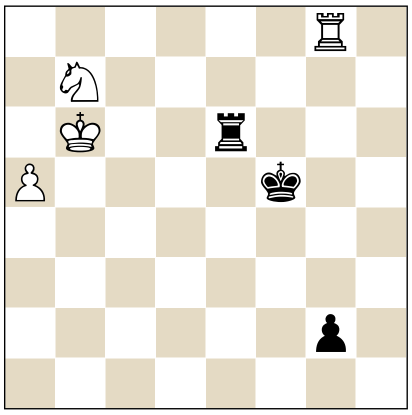
73.♖xb3? Again, played too soon, without even considering his reply.

The b-pawn wasn't dangerous at all. Instead, ♔c3 and ♔xb3 would win the pawn with tempo. Even simply ignoring it with ♘c5 and a6, etc., would be winning. **73...g4!** Suddenly, things aren't nice at all. **74.♖b6 g3 75.♖g6 g2 76.♔c4 ♔f3 77.♔b5 ♖b2+ 78.♔c6 ♖a2 79.♔b6 ♖b2+ 80.♔c6 ♖a2 81.♔b6** I finally gave up on trying to win, but he seized the shift in momentum with:



81...♖e2 It's hard to understand this move. White can draw by just taking 82.♖xg2. But I had messed up a winning position twice in the last few moves, so he decided to tempt me to try some ridiculous way to win. And I obliged: **82.♖f6+ ♔g4 83.♖g6+ ♔f3 84.♖f6+ ♔g4 85.♖g6+ ♔f5 86.♖g8??** Of course, 86.♖xg2 was the simplest draw. But I guess I was already hoping to win?

86...♖e6+!



Amazingly, I still have a draw with 87.♘d6+!, when it is elementary to calculate that we get a drawn queen vs pawn endgame. Instead, I continued making moves like a zombie:

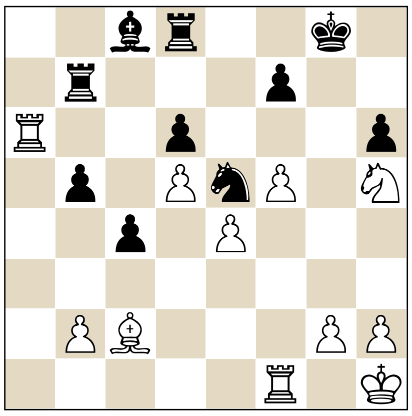
87.♔c7? ♖g6

And Black won soon after.

> 'Until almost the very end, I could have done better than a loss, but I was too blind to focus on the present.'

There were a lot of mistakes in those few last moves. But my mistakes had started much earlier. Throughout, in the back of my mind, I felt I had been winning so easily right after the opening. Until almost the very end, I could have done better than a loss, but I was too blind to focus on the present.

And these mistakes aren't always tactical. It's perhaps even harder to deal with the slower kind; slight inaccuracies and a sudden shift in the type of position. Suddenly it's so much harder to focus on the present position.



Nakamura-Carlsen
Shamkir 2014
position after 32...♖d8

A *déjà vu* game for Nakamura. A few months after blundering in a completely winning position in Zurich, once again he has outplayed the World Champion with powerful play, but now he is slowly starting to go wrong. From a position with a clear extra pawn he quickly collapses into a losing position:

33.♘g3?

Playing 33.♖a8 would have been annoying for Black. But most importantly, the knight was kind of strong on h5. Rerouting it to d4 doesn't have much point.

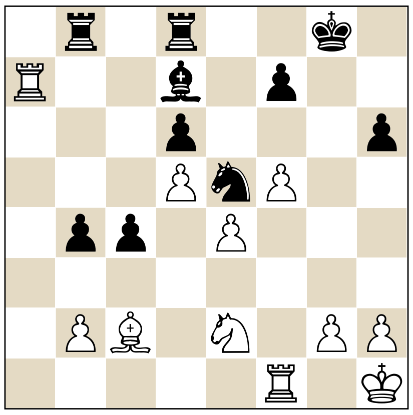
NEW IN CHESS ★ TRAINING ★

33...♖b8! Black seizes the moment to prevent the rook from going to a8.

34.♖a7 b4

Suddenly, things aren't as easy as they seemed before.

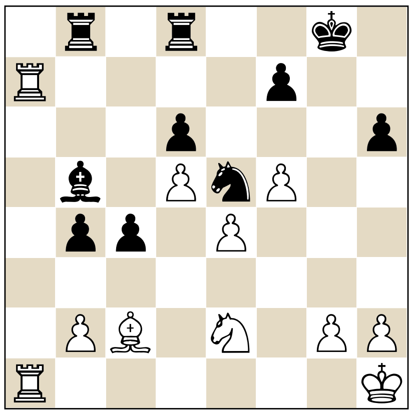
35.♘e2 ♗d7



36.♖fa1

36.♘d4 would have been the logical continuation of the knight manoeuvre, but Black already seems to have quite good compensation, while it's not clear what the knight is doing on d4.

36...♗b5!



37.h3 After 37.♘d4, 37...b3! was the idea Nakamura had probably missed before playing 36.♖fa1. Now, after 38.♗d1 c3! 39.bxc3 b2, Black would be winning. **37...♖dc8 38.♔h2 c3**

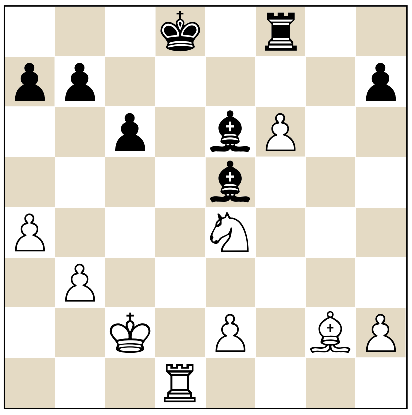
And White loses material (0-1, 52).

It's hard to say where White went wrong in the above game. But he did, and it went down fast. Surely, a player of Nakamura's calibre should be able to do far better in that position... if he hadn't known how good his position had been just a few moves before. With that knowledge, it was just so much harder to focus on the present position, and find useful improving moves.

Parimarjan's Chess Gym

Not just about one game

The effects of a downward spiral often go far, far beyond a single game. A bad move often lingers in your mind and affect it for many more games. I have spoilt countless wonderful tournaments by refusing to accept that I had played one bad game. For example, in the Commonwealth Championship I was playing powerful chess to be on 7½/8 before the following game.



Maletin-Negi
New Delhi 2010 (9)
position after 24.♖d1+

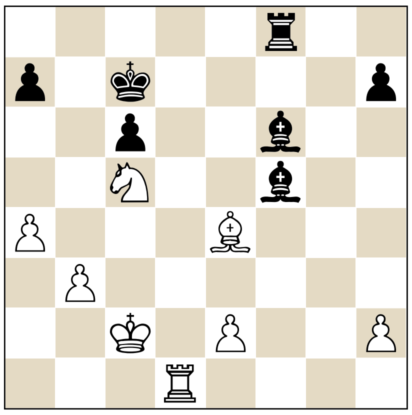
24...♔e8 A horrible blunder. I don't know why I would want my king to be on such a weird square. But the biggest problem is that ...♗xf6 will now be met by ♘d6+ and ♘xb7.

Instead, 24...♔c7 would have given Black a very comfortable endgame. It's not hard to see that he doesn't have to worry about the f6-pawn at all.

25.♗f3!

Forcing 25...♗xf6. Once I realized what I had done, I just lost all hope, and couldn't focus on putting up any proper resistance at all, despite many good opportunities.

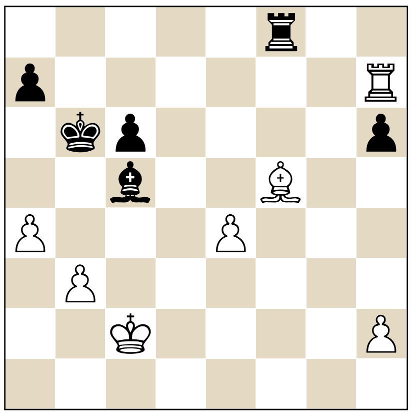
25...♗xf6 26.♘d6+ ♔d7 27.♘xb7+ ♔c7 28.♘c5 ♗f5+ 29.♗e4



29...♗e7?!

Going into the opposite-coloured bishops endgame was just desperation. Instead, I think that after 29...♗c8 the two bishops should give Black decent drawing chances. But I had such a nice position only a few moves back; how could I convince myself to suffer interminably in a worse endgame? So I decided to force matters – either I would be lost soon, or it would be a drawish opposite-coloured bishops endgame. It's always a very bad idea to become desperate – especially if it is because of how things were in the past.

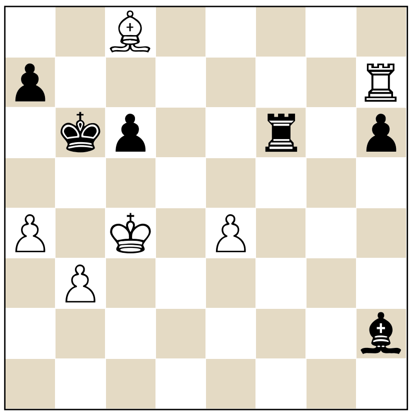
30.♗xf5 ♗xc5 31.♖d7+ ♔b6 32.e4 h6 33.♖h7



33...♖f6?!

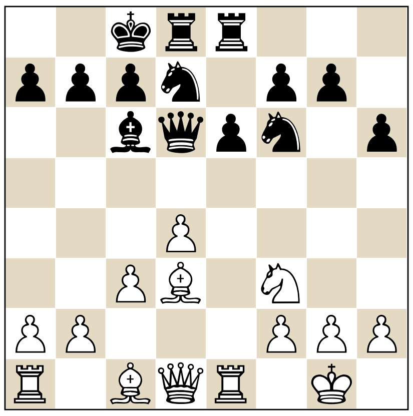
Allowing ♗c8 ideas, which I had completely overlooked again. 33...♗e3, followed by ...a5, etc., would still lead to an endgame in which I would have a fighting chance.

34.♔c3 ♗d6 35.♔c4 ♗xh2 36.♗c8



And I just got mated.

This was followed by me sleepwalking through the next round.



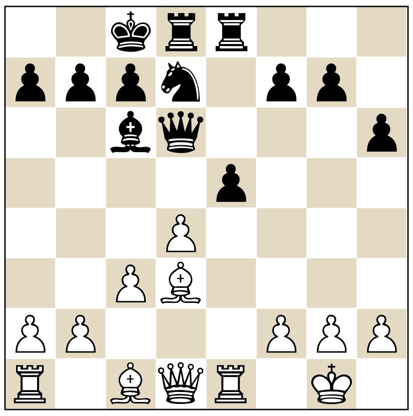
Negi-Lafuente
New Delhi 2010 (10)
position after 12...♖e8

I had played the opening in a very uninspired way, and Black is probably already doing fine. Still, it's very hard to justify my next move.

13.♘e5?

Since White can't recapture dxe5, this move makes no sense at all.

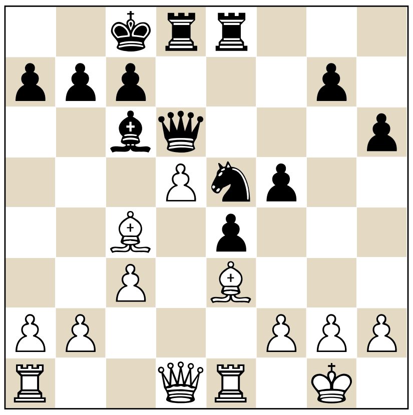
13...♘xe5 14.♖xe5 ♘d7 15.♖e1 e5! Of course!



16.♗e3 e4 17.♗c4

The ♗c4 and d5 plan makes matters even worse, although the position was far from fun already.

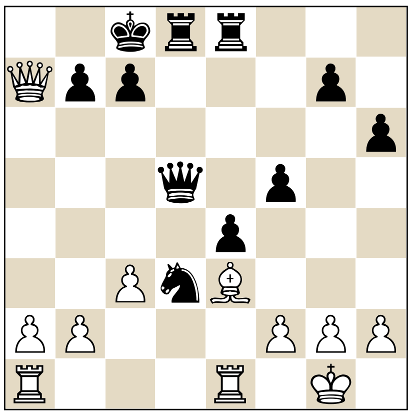
17...f5 18.d5 ♘e5!



An obvious move. White loses the pawn.

NEW IN CHESS TRAINING

19.♕d4
As 19.dxc6 hits on 19...♕xc6.
19...♗xd5 20.♗xd5 ♕xd5 21.♕xa7 ♘d3

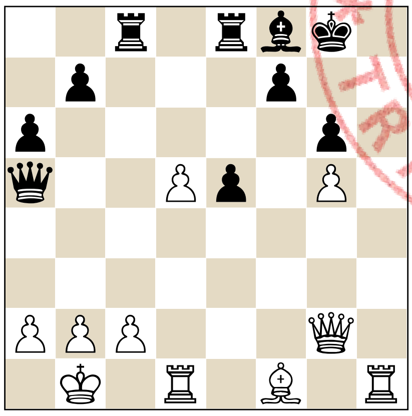


And I didn't put up much resistance (0-1, 28).

This could hardly be called a game. Yet, just two days back, I had been demolishing everyone in the tournament. Sometimes, little psychological things have a much bigger effect than we realize.

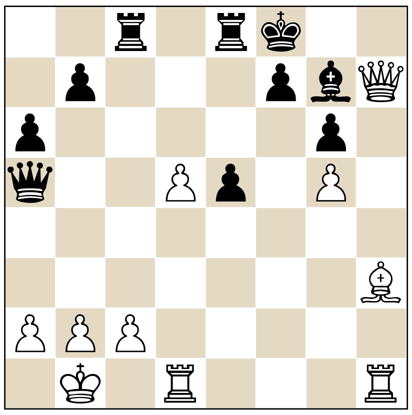
Fighting it

In the end, what you do after such a mistake is far more important. The main thing is to realize that you're sliding down the slope, so that you can put a stop to it. It's natural to feel frustrated – but realizing that it's not over, and that you're running the risk of falling apart again, is the first step towards controlling it. I am still not very good at overcoming my emotions, but I no longer lose multiple games in a row, or collapse immediately after a mistake. There really is no magical cure to the feelings that keep us stuck in the past, but the least you can do is keep making an effort to think about the new situation on the board. This may sound easy, but you need to put in a lot of effort to keep doing that, without expecting anything. You might not always find a good way back, but if you don't even try to adjust to life after a mistake, then you won't know. And in chess, there are always ideas lurking just beyond your reach.

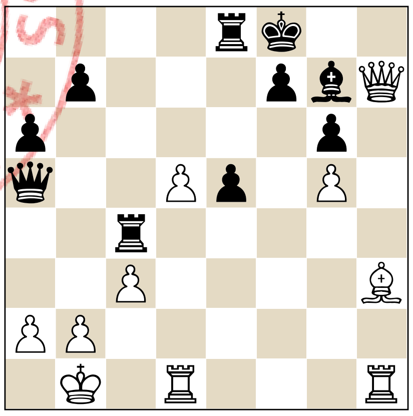


Negi-Cheparinov
Helsingor 2013
position after 23...dxe5

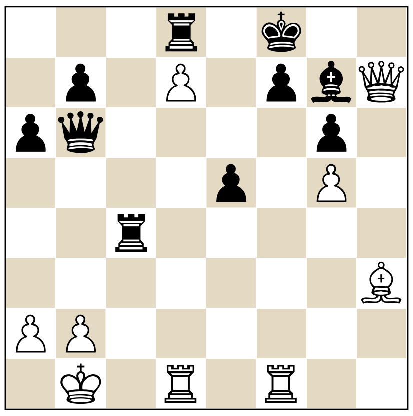
White is close to winning. The ♕h3 threat hangs over Black like a bomb waiting to explode, and I could prepare it with many different moves. Instead, I spent a while calculating, and then thought that I had found a clean, forced way to win at once:
24.♕h3 ♗g7 25.♕h7+ ♔f8 26.♗h3
Planning to continue ♖hf1, ♗e6, ♕xg6, etc. – it felt as if Black's position was collapsing. But here he got the amazing:



26...♖c4!!
Absolutely the only move. Suddenly, the rook on f1 can be blocked (as Black has ...♖f4), and White no longer has any threats, while the queen is just misplaced on h7. It was almost impossible to focus after this sudden shift in play – I could find almost no attacking ideas, whereas Black is suddenly ready to attack. The bishop on g7 is perfectly placed – and after ...e4, the position of White's king is looking very precarious...
27.c3



27...♕b6 At first, I was almost ready to give up here. I definitely didn't want to play the passive position after 28.♖hf1 ♖f4 29.♖xf4. But, as I knew by now, it was no use in thinking about how the position was.
28.d6 Here, I began to see the idea that eventually allowed me to escape.
28...♖d8 29.d7 ♖xc3 30.♖hf1 ♖c4 The computer points out that 30...e4 is better, but it's still quite complicated – particularly in time-trouble.



31.♖xf7+! The key idea! I finally make the ♕h7 count for something.
31...♔xf7 32.♗g2! ♖h8 33.♕xh8 ♗xh8 34.d8♕ ♕xd8 35.♖xd8
And I was able to hold the game.

Conclusion

One mistake isn't enough to lose a game, but psychologically it often can be. A mistake makes you vulnerable and it can lead to an avalanche of other mistakes if you just give up. So the crucial idea is to keep trying. There will be enough time after the game to worry about your bad play and dream about the things that could've been. While you're playing, the only thing you should worry about is the question: What can I do next? ■

Upsets in Skopje

With a brilliant Vladimir Kramnik on first board, Siberia Novosibirsk won the European Club Cup in Skopje, Macedonia. The former World Champion scored 4½ from 5 (a 3102 performance) and defeated old rival Veselin Topalov in the key match against defending champions SOCAR.

All eyes were on the team of SOCAR at the outset of the 32nd European Club Cup. Last year, the Azeri juggernaut won all their matches, and with Topalov, Giri, Caruana, Adams, Radjabov and Mamedyarov on board, they had the highest Elo average of 2771. But despite this formidable line-up there were no guarantees, as an amazing five teams boasted an over 2700 Elo average. These were the other four:

- **Siberia Novisibirsk** (avg. 2752): Kramnik, Aronian, Grischuk, Li Chao, Wang Yue, Korobov.
- **Alkaloid Macedonia** (avg. 2731): Ivanchuk, Tomashevsky, Jakovenko, Kryvoruchko, Yu Yangyi.
- **Obiettivo Risarcimento** (avg. 2720): Nakamura, Karjakin, Vachier-Lagrave, Leko, Bacrot, Godena.
- **Mednyi Vsadnik** – named after Pushkin's poem *The Bronze Horseman*, which is also the name of an equestrian statue of Peter the Great in St. Petersburg (avg. 2704): Svidler, Dominguez, Vitiugov, Matlakov, Rodshtein, Fedoseev.

As in many other sports, chess club teams have increasingly become assemblages of the odd local player and elite mercenaries. For sentimental reasons this might be called a pity, but at the same time it guarantees the presence of lots of top grandmasters and tension till the very end. Indeed, in the final round Siberia had to work hard to tie the match against Obiettivo Risarcimento from Padua, Italy, but in essence the decisive moment in the championship was Siberia's win over SOCAR in Round 5. Mickey Adams scored the only win for SOCAR, against Li Chao, while Kramnik and Grischuk collected full points for Siberia against Topalov and Caruana.

In the five rounds that he played, Kramnik also defeated Nepomniachtchi, Svidler and Ivanchuk, but

The star team that brought Siberia Novosibirsk the European Club Cup: Wang Yue, Li Chao, Levon Aronian, Vladimir Kramnik, Anton Korobov, the representative of the sponsor (Sberbank), Alexander Grischuk, Dmitry Bocharov, Dmitry Kokarov and Pavel Maletin (coach).

MARIA EMELIANOVA

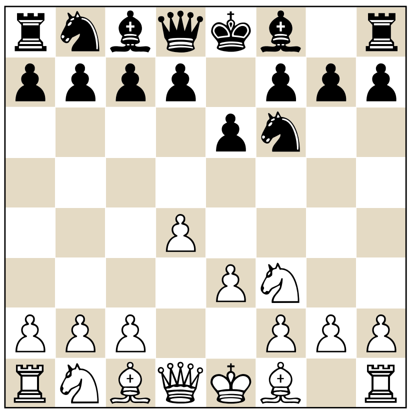
when we asked him to annotate one of his games, he suggested that our readers would probably prefer to see his win against SOCAR's top board.

Kramnik's masterful notes are followed by another remarkable game from Skopje. These days, opening novelties tend to be far less dramatic than they were in the early days of computer-assisted preparation, let alone that they were kept for a decade before they were detonated. But that is exactly what happened in the game between Yannick Pelletier (Schachgesellschaft Zürich) and Hikaru Nakamura (Obiettivo Risarcimento) in Round 2. The Swiss GM won a beautiful game against the King's Indian(!) with an idea that he had discovered some 12 years ago!

NOTES BY
Vladimir Kramnik

QI 3.9 – E14
Vladimir Kramnik
Veselin Topalov
Skopje 2015 (5)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.e3



This opening scheme came as a surprise to my opponent. Literally a few days before our encounter I had played this at the Rapid and Blitz World Championships in Berlin, and quite successfully, but apparently Topalov had not looked at these games. He stopped to think and chose an unsuccessful move order.

3...c5 4.♗d3 b6 5.0-0 ♗b7 6.c4

Already in this position Black does not have a great choice.

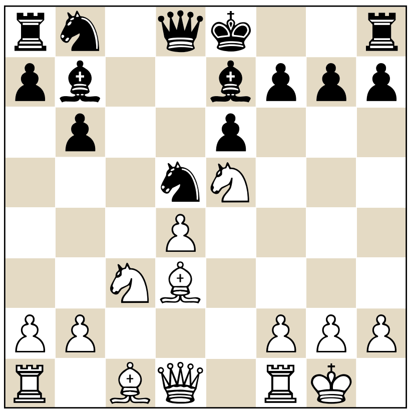
6...cxd4 7.exd4 ♗e7 8.♘c3 d5

This has to be played, since if 8...0-0 there follows 9.d5, and White has a stable plus, as has already been demonstrated in practice.

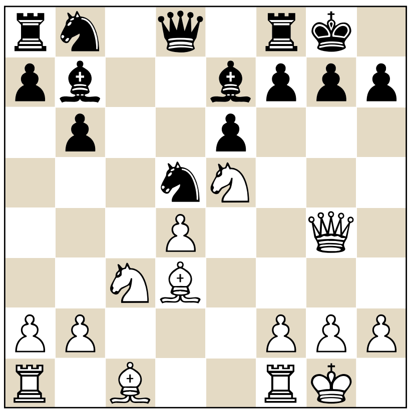
9.cxd5 ♘xd5 10.♘e5

After the normal move order in the Queen's Indian with e2-e3 Black has more reliable ways of equalizing: he is not obliged to hurry with ...c7-

c5 and can begin with ...d7-d5. The resulting position is not in itself easy for Black, and in addition the play here is crucial. To all appearances, Topalov either did not know or did not remember the variation. He spent a lot of time, although he did not respond badly – as well he could: it is possible that here Black altogether has no way of equalizing.



10...0-0 11.♕g4

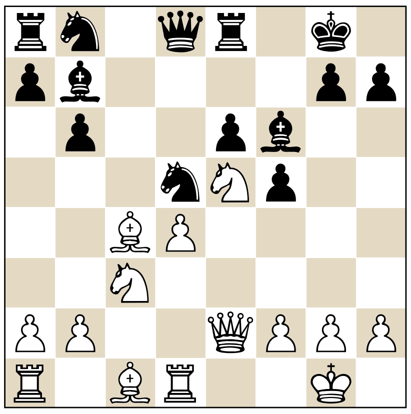


11...f5 It is clear that in such structures this is not a move that is made willingly. But in fact White already has quite a number of threats, one of the main ones being 12.♗h6 ♗f6 13.♕e4. After the main theoretical move 11...♘f6 there follows 12.♕h4, when it is not easy for Black to develop. Probably the best that he can devise is to go in for the complications of 12...♘e4 13.♕h3 ♕xd4 14.♗f4. Here the theory does not yet come to an end; to go in for such play without computer analysis is rather difficult (I should add: and the more so after computer analysis).

12.♕e2 ♗f6 This has been played by some quite good players, but it is obvious that White has an enduring initiative. It is no longer possible to call the d4-pawn an isolani, since it is no weaker than the e6-pawn. I was happy with the outcome of the opening.

> ‘Chess is in general a drawn game, and often you have to choose continuations which are more to your taste.’

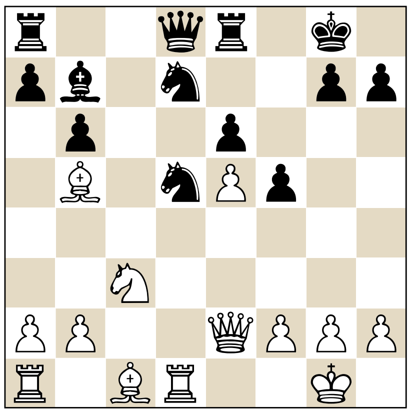
13.♗c4 ♖e8 14.♖d1



I had some vague recollections of this position. I remembered that after the critical 14...♘c6 the most interesting seemed to be 15.♘xd5 exd5 16.f4 – an unexpected move! The bishop is not hanging, and after, say, 16...♕d6 17.♗b3 Black has an extremely unpleasant position. There is no way for the knight to reach e4, whereas White can do what he wants, and in time he will begin play on the kingside. The bishop on b7 is bad, and White has a clear positional advantage.

14...♘d7

But how to reply to this move was something that, I have to admit, I did not remember. Perhaps I did not pay much attention to this line, considering it favourable for White. It is obvious that he can maintain the pressure with practically any move, such as 15.♗d2, for example. Even so, I wanted to play more forcefully, and after quite a long think I went **15.♗b5** ... which practically forces Black to play **15...♗xe5 16.dxe5**

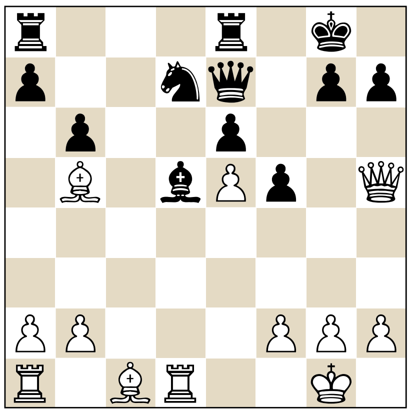


16...♕e7

The immediate 16...a6 does not work because of 17.♘xd5 axb5 (in the event of the capture on d5 by the bishop, the a6-pawn is hanging, while capturing with the pawn is bad from the positional point of view), and here I thought that 18.♘f4 was good, but the computer demonstrates the resource 18...♕c7 19.♖d6 ♗d5 when Black, completely on the defensive, still somehow holds on, retaining drawing chances. 18.♘b4 is stronger, when in the event of 18...♕e7 19.♖d6 Black's position begins to crumble.

In any event, I considered 16...♕e7 to be the main continuation. Here White can play unhurriedly, but I thought that the queen move to h5 was the most critical.

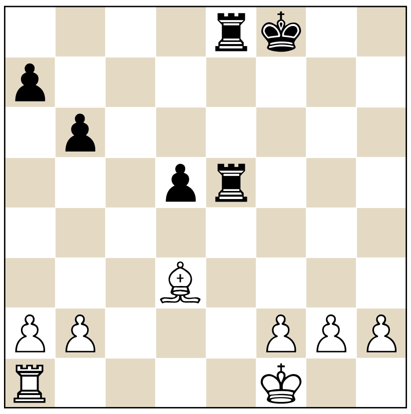
17.♘xd5 ♗xd5 18.♕h5



In this position it is already difficult for Black to maintain material equality. 19.♗g5 is threatened, and it is very important that 18...h6 leads to a bad endgame after 19.♗xh6 gxh6 20.♕g6+ ♔f8 21.♕xh6+ ♔f7 22.♖xd5 exd5 23.♕h7+ ♔f8 24.♕xf5+ ♕f7 25.♗xd7 ♕xf5 26.♗xf5 ♖xe5 27.♗d3 ♖ae8 28.♔f1.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

Vladimir Kramnik: 'If you look at the game as a whole, it may be noticed that I made a choice in favour of restricting the opponent's play, whereas Topalov's was in favour of quick counterplay. What largely told here were preferences in style.'



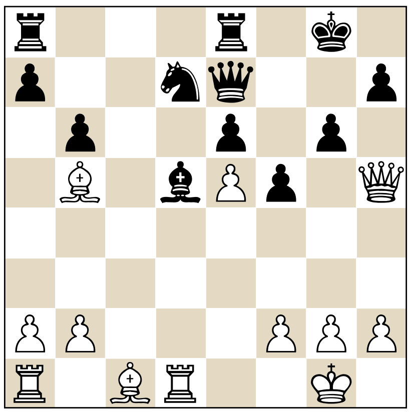
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

I think that it is technically won for White, although the computer assesses it only as 'plus-equal'. The pawns advance, and I do not see how Black can create counterplay – apart from by trying to exchange rooks on the c-file, but even this does not guarantee an easy life.

I thought that Topalov would go in for the active continuation 18...♘xe5. I calculated the variations after 19.♗g5 when I was considering 15.♗b5. I saw that the amusing 19...♕b7 20.♗xe8 ♗xg2 would lose to 21.♖d7. There is also the tactical resource 19...♗f3, which is pretty, but it hardly helps, since after 20.gxf3 ♕xg5+ 21.♕xg5 ♘xf3+ 22.♔g2 ♘xg5 23.♗xe8 ♖xe8 24.♖d7 the endgame with the rook on the 7th rank must be won.

Therefore Black has to retreat: 19...♕f8, and after 20.♗xe8 ♖xe8 21.♖ac1 the computer gives White quite a serious advantage, and this is probably so, although Black has drawing chances.

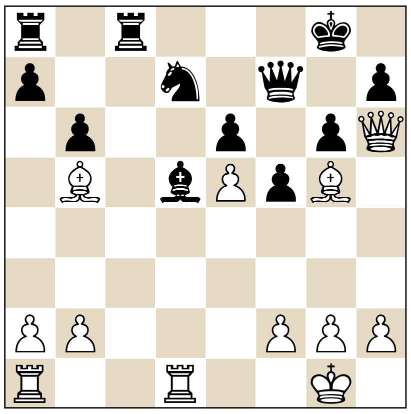
18...g6



19.♕h6

I very much wanted to post my bishop on f6, in order to create threats. Although on e3 it also stands well – all the same Black's king is weak. For example, 19.♕g5 a6 20.♗xd7 ♕xd7 21.♗e3 b5 and then h4 and b3 – following the same scheme.

19...♖ec8 20.♗g5 ♕f7



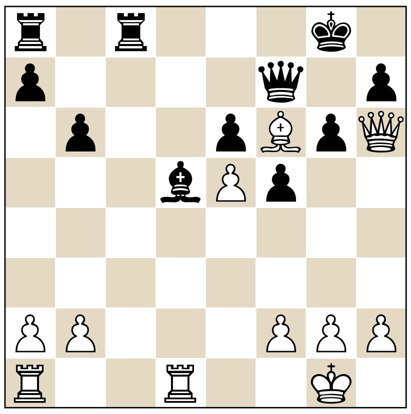
21.♗xd7

Here there was again a choice. I thought that the bishop on f6 and the potential attack were very dangerous. But I also could have kept the two bishops. For example, 21.♗f4 a6 22.♗f1 b5 23.b3, followed by simply playing the position slowly. White undoubtedly has pressure; he places his pawn on f3 and will strengthen his position. At some point Black exchanges queens on g7 and his position will be hard to breach.

It seemed to me that the exchange on d7 was more promising, although, as analysis demonstrates, here also Black can hold the draw. On the other hand, chess is in general a drawn game, and often you have to choose continuations which are more to your taste.

21...♕xd7 22.♗f6 ♕f7

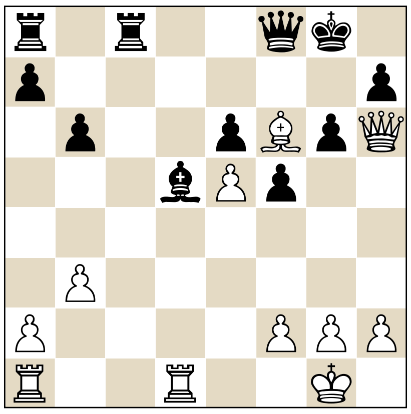
A significant moment. Black is forced to spend a tempo moving his queen, since he loses after 22...♖c2 (or 22...♖c4) 23.♖xd5! exd5 24.e6. After 24...♕c7 25.e7 the c1-square is defended, and White simply mates.



23.b3 I made this move 'mechanically', without seriously thinking about it. I decided that all the same it would have to be made sooner or later. It is very important to prevent the defensive manoeuvre ...♖c4, which applies in many variations when White begins advancing his h-pawn.

The computer suggests 23.♖d3 immediately, creating a direct attack without loss of time. For the moment 23...♖c4 is a blank shot, since after 24.b3 the rook has no decent squares on the 4th rank. However, there is the defence 23...♖c2 24.♖g3 ♖ac8 25.h4 ♖8c4. Black holds the position, albeit with difficulty; so the c4-square proves important nevertheless. The subsequent play is rather forcing: 26.h5 ♖g4 27.♖xg4 fxg4 28.♕g5 h6 (a slightly crazy resource) 29.♕xg4 (29.♕xh6 ♕h7) 29...g5. The queen is included via h7, and Black is probably alright here – all his pieces have become exceedingly active.

23...♕f8

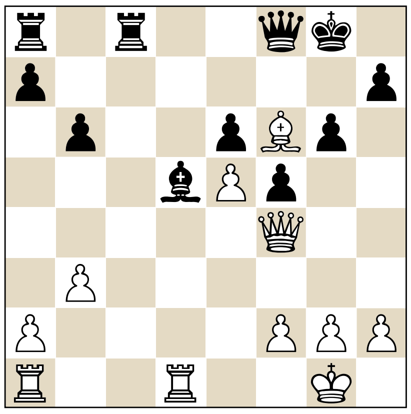


24.♕f4

Here I hesitated. In fact, the position is a rather complicated one to play, despite its apparent simplicity and the clarity of the plans. Both sides have to alternate attack and defence. Black wants to create counterplay, but he also needs to safeguard his king. White wants to attack, but he needs to watch for invasions of the second rank. It is very difficult to decide on a choice, which is often made intuitively. If you look at the game as a whole, it may be noticed that I made a choice in favour of restricting the opponent's play, whereas Topalov's was in favour of quick counterplay. What largely told here were preferences in style.

24.♕g5 looks more active and does not allow ...h7-h6, but it would appear that Black can create counterplay just in time: 24...♖c2 25.h4 ♖ac8 26.h5 ♕b4 (it was this that I did not want to allow; now it all ends by force in a drawn endgame) 27.hxg6 ♕g4 28.♕xg4 fxg4 29.gxh7+ ♔xh7 30.♖d4 g3 (a sacrifice of a second pawn) 31.♖h4+ ♔g6 32.♖g4+ ♔f5 33.♖xg3 ♖c1+ 34.♖xc1 ♖xc1+ 35.♔h2 ♖c2, and the computer begins indicating rigid zeroes.

The text-move reduces somewhat the tempo of the attack, but on the other hand I prevent the activation of the queen.



Here Black committed probably his only mistake in the entire game (if one disregards the badly played opening), and it proved decisive.

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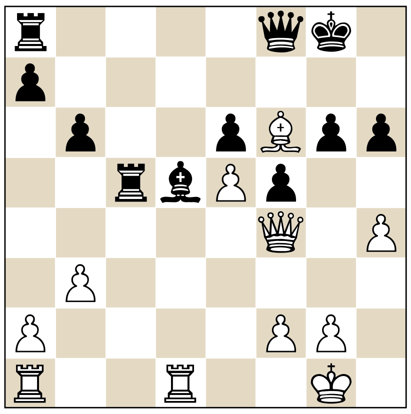
I was in no doubt that Topalov would play 24...h6, and I did not even examine other continuations. It seemed obvious to me that it was dangerous to allow h4-h5, except in cases when Black has a very concrete tactical solution to his problems, as in the preceding variation. 24...h6 was a passive move, but an obligatory one.

After 25.h4 there is another important move – 25...♖c5!. Black, so to speak, has to stand firm and be patient. It turns out that it is very difficult to breach his position. If he launches into counterplay with 25...♖c2, then the exchange sacrifice, which is constantly in the air, is very strong. After 26.♖xd5 exd5 27.♖d1 ♕c5 28.h5 White has a fearfully strong attack. Standing on c5, the rook prevents this sacrifice.

On the conclusion of the game I analysed the position after 25...♖c5.

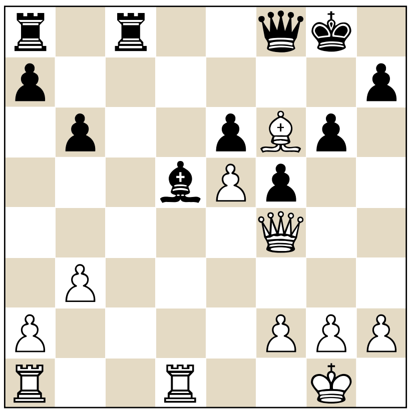


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

The human desire is not to exchange rooks and to play 26.♖d3 ♖ac8 27.♖ad1 – to retain as many pieces as possible on the board, for a potential attack. But in reality it is completely unclear how to break through in the event of 27...♔h7 28.♔h2 ♕f7 – there is no apparent plan.

Therefore the strongest procedure is the exchange of all the rooks. Say, 26.♖ac1 ♖ac8 27.♖xc5 ♖xc5 28.♖c1 ♔h7 29.♔h2 ♖xc1 30.♕xc1 ♕c5 31.♕d2. To be honest, during the game I thought that White could exert some slight pressure, but that in general this was an easy draw. After analysing, I realised that all was not so simple. In fact Black has altogether no moves: his king is tied to the h6-pawn, his bishop cannot move, because then the queen invades, and if ...a7-a5 there is always the possibility of 'latching on' by ♗d8, without allowing the exchange of queens. In some cases, if Black gives up a pawn with the exchange of queens, the opposite-coloured bishops ending may be lost – the white king rushes to the queenside. Zugzwang motifs appear. White strengthens his position – f2-f3, ♔g3, and at some time tries to break through with his queen into Black's position. Moreover, this position can probably be obtained with an extra tempo – with the pawn already on f3. If, for example, White does not exchange on c5, but begins with ♔h2.

I have no doubts that with accurate play the position can be held, but even so there are practical problems, and things are not so simple. It demands a lengthy and passive defence by Black. In any case, this was the best chance. I think that Peter Leko would have played this without thinking, but I suspect that even if Veselin had played ...h6, after h4 all the same he would have continued ...♖c2, since ...♖c5 is really not in his style.



24...♖c2? 25.h4 ♖ac8 26.h5

It is probable that Black's position can no longer be defended. It turns out that he has no real counterplay, whereas his king does indeed come under a very serious attack.

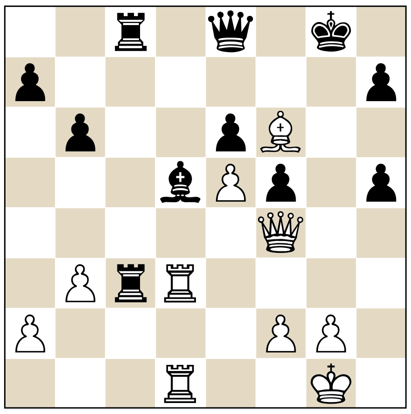
26...♕e8

26...♕f7 is somewhat more logical, but here also after 27.♖d3 ♖2c3 28.♖ad1 gxh5 Black's position is unenviable. The unhurried 29.♔h2 can be played, but 29.♖xd5 exd5 30.♖xd5 is strong – the rook cannot be taken, and White has a very powerful attack.

27.♖d3 ♖2c3 Forced, since hxg6 hxg6, ♖h3 was threatened.

28.♖ad1 gxh5

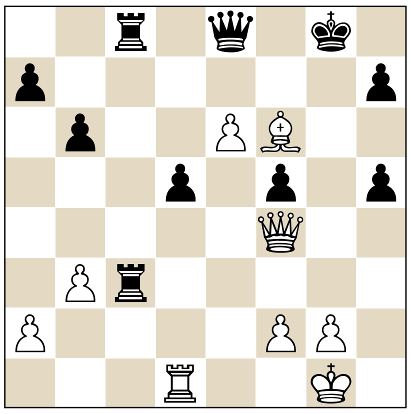
Obviously this is the whole idea – to play the queen to g6, otherwise White will unhurriedly give mate.



29.♖xd5! As strong as it is natural. I had no great doubts about this move, but I exerted myself and checked the variations thoroughly.

29...exd5 30.e6

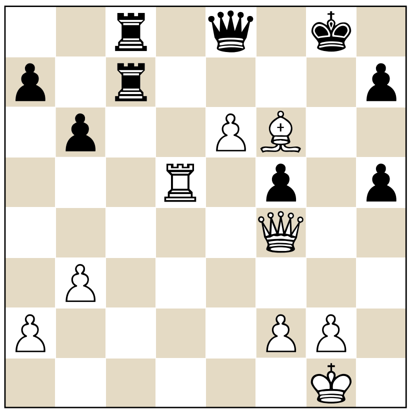
According to the computer, 30.♖xd5 was simpler. It assesses the position as completely won for White. From the human point of view 30.e6 is better, since it leads to a forced win in all lines. It may be a little more complicated, but when I made the move I had already calculated all the variations given below.



30...♖3c7

By this point Topalov had used up nearly all of his time. Apparently it was only here he realized that the planned 30...♖3c6 loses to 31.♖d3 ♖xe6 32.♖g3+ ♔f7 33.♕h6!. When I saw this resource I was already sure about the move 30.e6. Despite being the exchange up, Black has no defence. The main variation is 33...♖xf6 34.♕g7+ ♔e6 35.♖e3+, when White picks up everything. The attempt to give up rook for bishop by 30...♕g6 also will not do in view of 31.♗xc3 ♖xc3 32.♕b8+ ♔g7 33.e7. There only remains the move in the game.

31.♖xd5



31...♕xe6 The following echo-variations, using the language of study

MY OPPONENT DOESN'T UNDERSTAND ME
VONK

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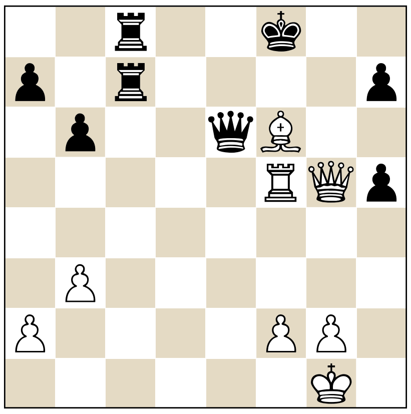
composers, seemed very attractive to me: if 31...♕g6, then 32.♕xc7, while if 31...♖c1+ 32.♔h2 ♕g6 – 33.♕xc1. The rook is quite unable to escape from the pursuit of the queen.

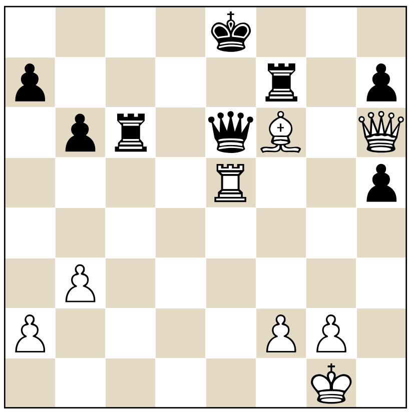
32.♕g5+ ♔f8 32...♔f7 is slightly more resilient, although it does not essentially change things: 33.♖xf5 ♖c5 34.♕xh5+ ♔f8 35.♗e5+ ♔e7 36.♕xh7+ ♔e8. I was intending 37.♖g5 (the computer considers 37.f4 to be simpler). White is threatening ♖g8, and after 37...♖xe5 38.♕h5+ with two extra pawns he will win anyhow...

33.♖xf5



Here, in the words of the Revolutionary song, 'a young soldier suddenly drooped his head'. The computer points out that after the natural 33...♖c5 34.♗e7+ ♔e8 there is an immediate win by 35.♖f8+ ♔d7 36.♗xc5, which, of course, is true. But for safety's sake I calculated the variation 35.♗xc5 ♖xc5 36.♕xh5+ ♔d7 37.♖xc5, which also wins easily.

33...♖f7 34.♕h6+ ♔e8 35.♖e5 ♖c6



It was on this resource that Black was pinning his last hopes in time-trouble. White has more than one way to win, but I chose an elegant and simple one.

36.♕xh5 Black is pinned across the board, he is left a great deal of material down, and here Veselin resigned. I think that the game turned out to be good, interesting and of high quality, essentially with one single mistake. But the main thing was that at that moment it was already clear that our team were the main contenders for first place. We won the match by a margin of one point, and thus this game became a key one for the outcome of the entire tournament.

Skopje 2015

1	Siberia	RUS	6	0	1	13
2	SOCAR	AZE	5	1	1	11
3	Mednyi Vsadnik	RUS	5	1	1	11
4	Obiettivo Risarcimento Padova	ITA	5	1	1	11
5	Ave Novy Bor	CZE	5	2	0	10
6	Alkaloid	MKD	5	2	0	10
7	Shsm Legacy Square	RUS	5	2	0	10
8	Univerzity-Belorechensk	RUS	5	2	0	10
9	LSG Leiden	NED	5	2	0	10
10	SC MPA – Maria Saal	AUT	5	2	0	10
11	Beer-Sheva	ISR	5	2	0	10
12	Tammer-Shakki	FIN	4	2	1	9
13	Odlar Yurdu	AZE	4	3	0	8
14	Schachgesellschaft Zürich	SUI	4	3	0	8
15	Worldtradinglab Club 64 Modena	ITA	4	3	0	8
16	Riehen	SUI	3	2	2	8
17	Vaalerenga	NOR	4	3	0	8
18	Rishon Lezion	ISR	4	3	0	8
19	KSK 47 Eynatten	BEL	4	3	0	8
20	Geneva Chess Club	SUI	4	3	0	8
21	Oslo Schakselskap	NOR	4	3	0	8
22	Cheddleton	ENG	3	3	1	7
23	SK Team Viking	SWE	3	3	1	7
24	Hamburger Schachklub von 1830 E.V.	GER	3	3	1	7
25	Grupo Desportivo Dias Ferreira	POR	3	3	1	7
26	Gambit Asseko See	MKD	3	3	1	7
27	White Rose	ENG	3	3	1	7
28	Jetsmark	DEN	3	3	1	7
29	KBSK Brugge	BEL	3	4	0	6
30	HMC Calder	NED	3	4	0	6
31	Echiquier Amaytois	BEL	3	4	0	6
32	SV Werder Bremen	GER	3	4	0	6
33	Matinkylan Shakkikerho	FIN	3	4	0	6
34	MSK Centar	MKD	2	3	2	6

50 teams, 7 rounds

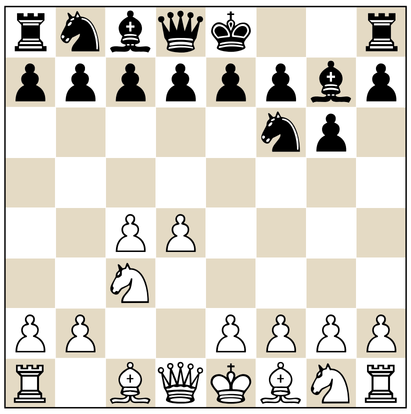
NOTES BY
Yannick Pelletier

KI 5.13 – E97
Yannick Pelletier
Hikaru Nakamura
Skopje 2015 (2)

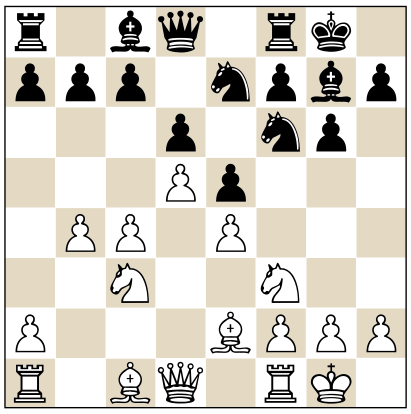
I had not faced Hikaru Nakamura since Biel 2005, when he made his debut at the Festival. Coincidentally, that Grandmaster Tournament also witnessed the first games between the American and another rising star called Magnus Carlsen.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7

The King's Indian was definitely an opening which I was expecting on that day. Even though Nakamura had had a full schedule since the Sinquefield Cup in August and would probably be somewhat tired, it was clear that he would try to win this game.



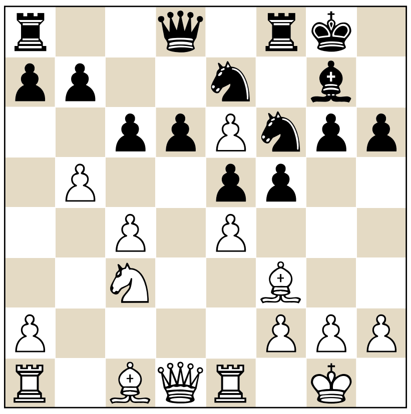
4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.b4



9...a5

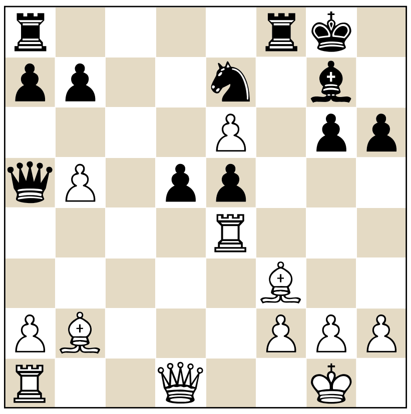
Ten years ago, Hikaru had preferred 9...♘h5 against me. That game went 10.♖e1 f5 11.♘g5 ♘f6 12.♗f3 c6

13.b5 h6 14.♘e6 ♗xe6 15.dxe6. Here, instead of the equalizing line starting with exchanges on e4, Black risked



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

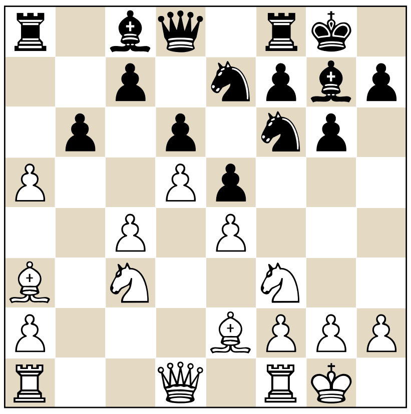
15...♕a5?!, but it all backfired after 16.♗b2 fxe4 17.♘xe4 ♘xe4 18.♖xe4 d5 19.cxd5 cxd5



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

20.♖xe5! ♗xe5 21.♗xe5 ♕xb5 22.♖b1 ♕c6 23.♗a1 ♖f4 24.g3 ♖c4 25.♕d2 ♕c5 26.♗f6 g5 27.♖xb7 ♖c1+ 28.♔g2 ♕c4 29.♕e2 ♕xe2 30.♗xe2 ♘f5 31.♗g4 1-0. Unfortunately, chess is not only about the King's Indian! I won't hide the fact that Nakamura beat me twice as White – in Pamplona in 2003 and in Biel in 2005.

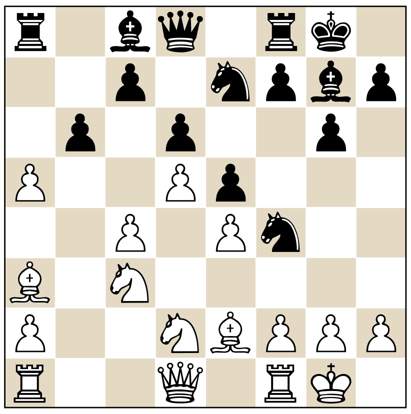
10.♗a3 b6 11.bxa5



> ‘Unfortunately, chess is not only about the King's Indian! I won't hide the fact that Nakamura beat me twice as White.’

11...♘h5 The main line goes 11...♖xa5 12.♗b4 ♖a8 13.a4, and I believe that Black is quite OK. With the text-move, Black tries to remain flexible as to how he is going to handle the defence of his queenside. This setup has been used many times by Ilya Smirin. I remember that I had first found the following idea when preparing for the Israeli Grandmaster before a Biel tournament in 2002 or 2003. And as so often, I never got the chance to use it, neither then, nor since. This is always frustrating, but I have stopped complaining...!

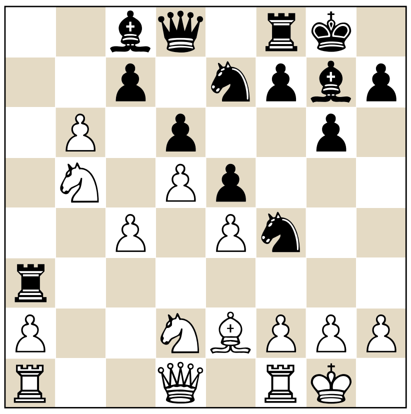
12.♘d2 ♘f4



13.axb6!

White sacrifices his ♗a3, but gets three pawns in return. Moreover, he leads the game into waters which generally do not suit King's Indian players too much. Indeed, Black is now busy on the queenside and is deprived of any attacking chances on the other side of the board.

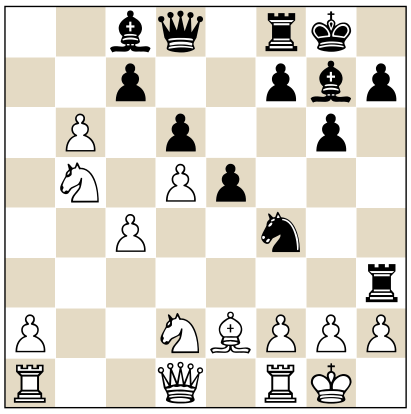
13...♖xa3 14.♘b5



14...♖a5?!

Nakamura spent about half an hour at this point, but failed to find the best reply. Withdrawing the rook is the right approach, but a5 is the wrong square. You may wonder what options Black has besides going back. Well, from White's point of view, the King's Indian is always full of unpleasant surprises! Here, Black can try to launch an attack with two different sacrifices: 14...♖h3? is refuted by 15.bxc7 (15.gxh3? cxb6, however, gives Black excellent compensation) 15...♕d7 16.gxh3 ♕xh3 17.♗f3 ♗g4 18.♔h1, when Black's activity quickly peters out.

14...♘exd5?! is more complicated. Without going too deeply, White manages to defend with 15.exd5 ♖h3 (the trickiest continuation)

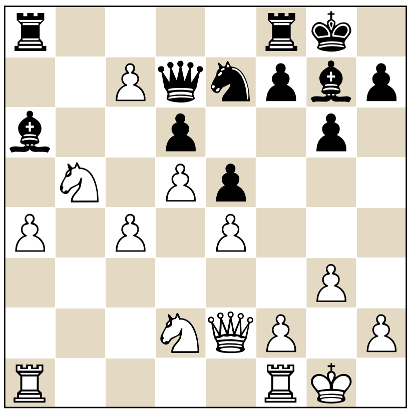


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

16.gxh3! (16.bxc7 ♕h4! 17.gxh3 e4 gives too many counter-chances) 16...♗xh3 17.♗g4 ♕g5 18.♘e4! ♕h4 19.bxc7!, and White is better, although, as always in the classical KI, he has to remain very careful.

The best variation for Black is 14...♖a8 15.bxc7 (15.♘xc7 ♖b8 16.c5 dxc5

17.♘c4 is what Nakamura did not like, as he admitted after the game. But Black is more than fine after 17...♖xb6! 18.♘xb6 ♕xc7 19.♘c4 ♗a6, since 20.d6? ♘xe2+ 21.♕xe2 ♕xd6 does not work) 15...♕d7 16.a4 ♗a6 17.g3 ♘xe2+ 18.♕xe2.

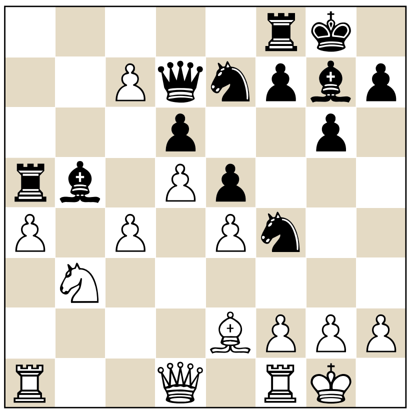


White has three pawns for the piece, some nice activity and nearly no risk of being attacked at the kingside. Yet things are obviously not so easy. According to my analysis, Black maintains the balance with some precise moves. It should be noted, however, that 18...♗xb5?! 19.cxb5 ♕xc7 20.♖fc1 is better for White. Both passed pawns will soon be supported by the knight and will therefore be able to advance dangerously.

15.bxc7 ♕d7 16.a4

The rook is usually a bad blockading piece, and this is no exception. White will be able to gain time to advance his pawns. In fact, Black should have admitted his inaccuracy and retreated to a8 voluntarily.

16...♗a6?! 17.♘b3 ♗xb5



18.cxb5

18.♘xa5? is bad. After 18...♗a6, c7 drops and the remaining pawns are not mobile.

18...♕xc7

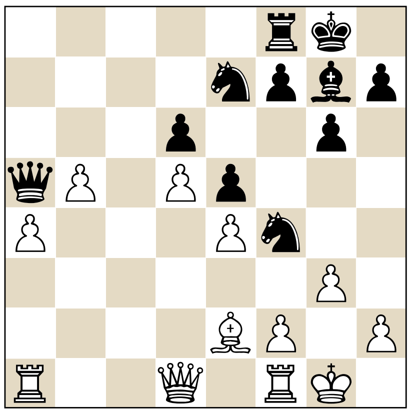
18...♖aa8? loses to 19.b6 ♖xa4 20.♘c5!.

19.♘xa5 ♕xa5 20.g3

White would like to play ♕e1 in order to unlock a5. But first, the active ♘f4 has to be eliminated.

DO YOU HAVE NIMZO-INDIAN CURRY WITH RICE GAMBIT?
DON'T MIND MY HUSBAND HE HAS AN IMPORTANT GAME TOMORROW
VONK

BEREND VONK



20...♘xe2+

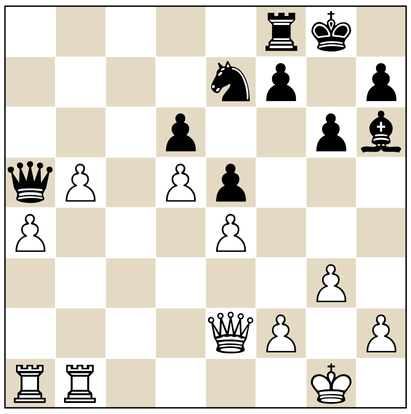
20...♘h3+?! 21.♔g2 ♘g5 22.f3 f5 23.h4 is not good, inasmuch as all kinds of sacrifices don't really work.

21.♕xe2 ♗h6

Activating the bishop is natural, as it controls c1 and also allows Black to meet ♕e1 with ...♗d2.

21...f5 is too slow to yield Black activity, for instance: 22.♕e1 ♕b6 23.a5!? ♕xb5 24.a6 ♖a8 25.a7 ♘c8 26.♕b1! ♕xb1 27.♖fxb1 ♖xa7 28.♖xa7 ♘xa7 29.♖b7, winning the knight.

22.♖fb1

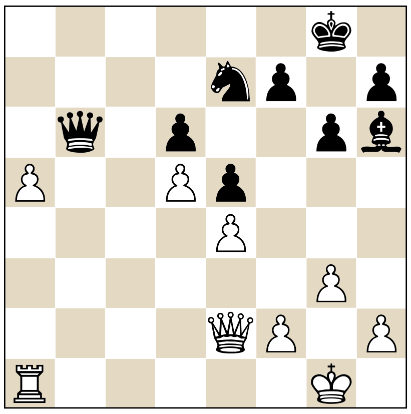


22...♖b8?!

The crucial question is whether Black will succeed in blocking the connected passed pawns on the dark squares. 22...♘c8 was definitely a better try. I intended to play, as in the game, 23.b6! (23.♖a2 allows 23...♗g5 and ...♗d8) 23...♘xb6 24.♕b5. The mandatory exchange of queens frees the way for the a-pawn. After the forced line 24...♕xb5 25.♖xb5 ♘d7 26.a5 ♖a8 27.a6 ♔f8 28.a7 ♔e7 29.♖b7 ♔d8 30.♖a6 ♔c8 31.♖b5, White keeps good winning chances. The decisive threat 32.♖c6+ ♔d8 33.♖b7 forces 31...♔d8. The white king now starts a long journey to the opposite corner, where it will support its pawn. It is important that after 32.♔f1 ♗d2?, White wins immediately with 33.♖b7 ♔c8 34.♖b2, followed by 35.♖c6+.

23.b6! Here again, the b-pawn sacrifices itself for the sake of its colleague. 23.♖a2 was the alternative, but I was not sure about the consequences of 23...f5.

23...♖xb6 24.♖xb6 ♕xb6 25.a5



MARIA EMELIANOVA

For twelve years Yannick Pelletier did not get a chance to show the fascinating idea he had found against the King's Indian. But after his win against Hikaru Nakamura he has stopped complaining!

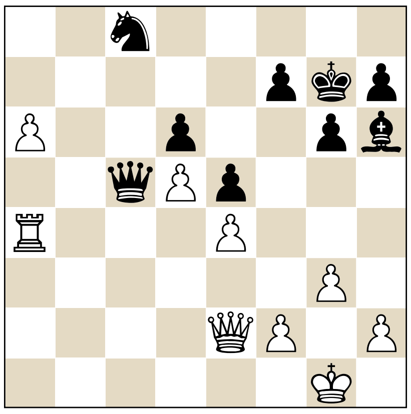
25...♕c5

I had expected 25...♕d4. During the game, I hesitated between 26.♖a2 and 26.♕d1!? ♗e3 (26...♕xe4?! 27.♖a4 ♕f5 28.a6) 27.♕xd4 ♗xd4 28.a6 ♘c8 29.♖b1, which should suffice to win. The basic plan is to activate the king and prepare a breakthrough on the kingside with f4. But the computer makes things easier and claims a comfortable win with 26.♖b1!.

26.♖a4

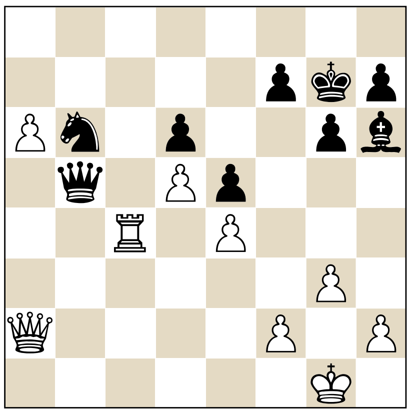
This move prevents the knight transfer to a7. But 26.a6 ♘c8 27.♖b1 ♘a7 28.♖b7 was easily winning thanks to the lethal threat ♕f3. It was only later that I hit upon the idea to combine this with threats against the black king.

26...♔g7 27.a6 ♘c8



28.♖c4 28.♕c4?! is tempting, but 28...♗e3! gives Black hope, as 29.fxe3? ♕xe3+ 30.♔f1 ♘b6! saves the day.

28...♕b5 29.♕a2 ♘b6 After 29...♘a7 30.♖c7 ♕b6 31.♖b7 ♕c5 32.♕e2!, as explained above, ♕f3 decides.

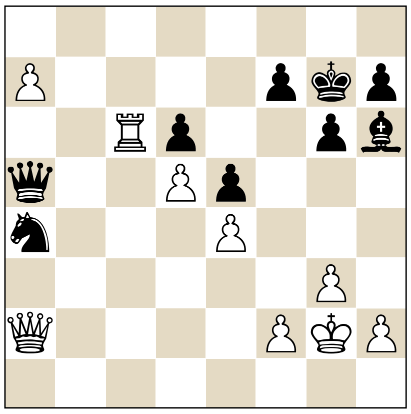


30.♖c6 Getting a second queen with 30.a7 ♘xc4 31.a8♕ was possible, but I preferred not to give my opponent any counter-chances. After 31...♘d2, threatening ...♕f1 mate, 32.♕8a6 ♕b4 33.♕d3 ♘xe4, I missed the resource 34.♕ab1!, which forces the exchange of queens. It is very unlikely that Black would have a fortress, but you never know.

30...♘a4

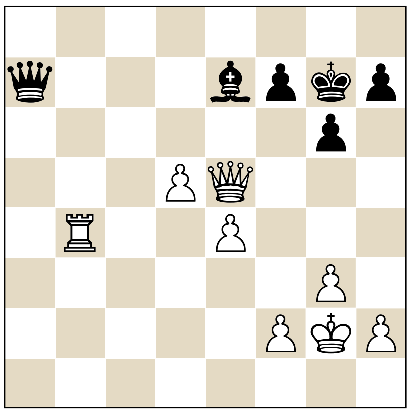
30...♘a8 31.♖c8 decides immediately.

31.a7 ♕a5 32.♔g2



It seemed wise to prevent the check on e1, even though it is not very dangerous. The rest is quite easy.

32...♕xa7 33.♖c4 ♗g5 34.♕xa4 ♕b7 35.♖b4 ♕c7 36.♕c6 ♕a7 37.♕xd6 ♗e7 38.♕xe5+



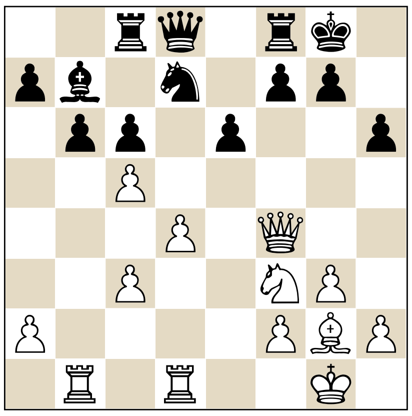
As 38...f6 is met by 39.♕b8, Black resigned. ■

Buried Bishops

ARTHUR VAN DE OUDEWEETERING

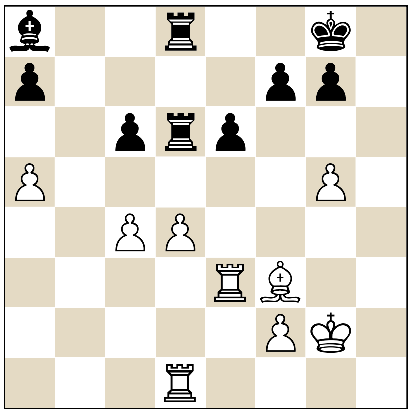
A bishop in the corner of the board staring at the back of a blockading pawn, who wants that?

A locked up bishop, what a dreadful fate for a piece that loves to glide along diagonals. Naturally you would never allow such a thing in your own games. But then, how come even very strong grandmasters have seen this happen to them?!



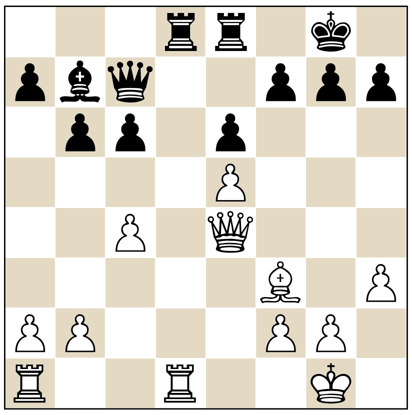
Onischuk-Naroditsky
St. Louis 2015
position after 20.♖ab1

20...♗a8 Of course Naroditsky realized this was not the best spot for the bishop. He may have been hoping to force White to give up the blockade of the c-pawn. Moreover, active solutions were not appealing either, for example 20...♗a6 21.♘e5 ♘xe5 22.dxe5 ♕c7 23.cxb6 axb6 24.♖d6 ♗b7 25.♕e3. **21.♘e5 ♕e7 22.♘xd7 ♕xd7 23.a4!** Onischuk does not oblige and maintains the pressure, refusing to liquidate to an endgame a pawn up, which would allow Black to exchange his dark-squared bishop after 23.cxb6 axb6 24.♖xb6 c5. **23...♖fd8 24.♗f3 ♕e7 25.♕e5 bxc5 26.♕xc5** 26.dxc5 seems stronger: 26...f6 (26...♗b7 27.♖d6) 27.♕e3 ♗b7 28.♖d6. **26...♕c7** 26...♕xc5 27.dxc5 ♔f8, and although Black may seem to be hopelessly passive, White still has to find a way to break through. In the game, Black went on to exchange queens apparently under much more favourable circumstances: **27.a5 ♖b8 28.c4 ♕d7 29.h4 ♖bc8 30.♔g2 ♖c7 31.♖b3 ♕c8 32.g4 ♖cd7 33.g5 hxg5 34.hxg5 ♕c7 35.♖e3 ♕d6 36.♕xd6 ♖xd6**



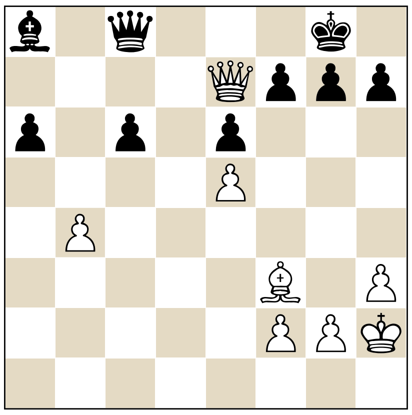
Now Naroditsky was planning to play ...c6-c5, when White would protect the d4-pawn. He must have been content with his defence, until Onischuk sprung his next move on him: **37.c5! ♖xd4 38.♖xd4 ♖xd4 39.♖b3 ♖d8 40.a6!**, and being virtually a piece up White went on to win the game. A delicious grind, which made Anish Giri tweet: 'I wish I was Onischuk today'. **40...♔f8 41.♗e4 f5 42.gxf6 gxf6 43.♖h3 ♔g8 44.♖d3 ♖xd3 45.♗xd3 f5 46.f4 ♔g7 47.♔f3 ♔f6 48.♔e3 e5 49.♗c4 e4 50.♔d4** 1-0.

Onischuk may have been inspired, and Naroditsky could have been warned, by the following classic:



Karpov-Lautier
Biel 1992
position after 18.♗f3

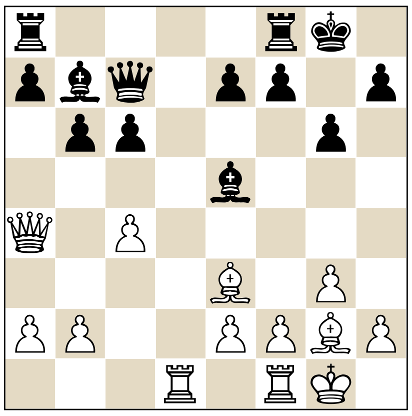
18...♗a8 Lautier, too, was of course intending this spot to be a temporary one for the bishop, planning an immediate ...c6-c5. Karpov consistently prevents this, also at the cost of a pawn. **19.♖xd8! ♖xd8 20.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 21.♗xd1** With Black's bishop still on b7, a decent move would have been 21...♗c8 here. **21...♕d8 22.♗f3** Of course! White may lose a pawn, but now the pin remains and White will continue with b4-b5 as soon as possible. **22...♕d2 23.b3 ♕xa2 24.b4 ♕a1+ 25.♔h2 ♕a6 26.♕d4 ♕c8 27.c5 bxc5 28.♕xc5 a6 29.♕e7**



Here, too, an endgame has arisen in which Black is doomed to complete passivity. As in the former game, Black ended up in a bishop ending a pawn up. Unfortunately, also here his bishop was still on a8 in the final position.

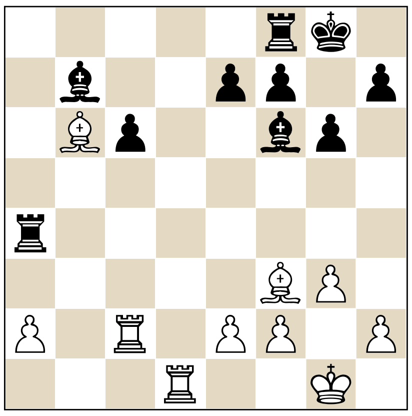
This brings to mind Tarrasch's dictum that 'When one piece stands badly the whole game stands badly'. The series of exchanges in the above games certainly proves his point. After that, too few active pieces remained to make up for the miserable position of the a8-bishop. On the other hand, with many pieces still on the board you can sometimes afford to leave one out of the action, as in Caruana-Topalov, St. Louis 2014. In that game, a white knight remained on a4 for 19 moves, until Black resigned, having lost the battle on the other side of the board.

In the recent European Cup Club, Kramnik proved that a minor piece can be a suitable blockader as well:



Kramnik-Nepomniachtchi
Skopje 2015
position after 15...♕c7

16.c5!? ♗xb2 17.♕b3 ♗f6 18.cxb6 axb6 19.♗xb6 ♕c8 Better was 19...♕b8! 20.♖b1 (20.♗c5 ♗a6) 20...c5 21.♗xb7 ♕xb7 22.♗xc5 ♕a6. **20.♖c1 ♕g4 21.♖c2 ♖a6 22.♗f3 ♕a4 23.♕xa4 ♖xa4 24.♖d1**

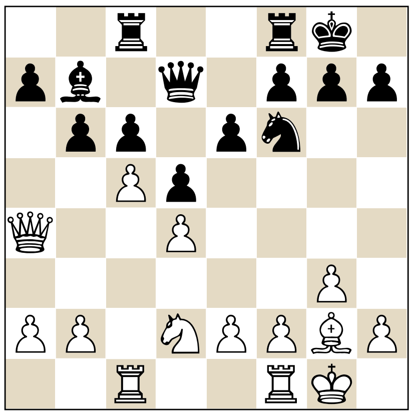


24...♗a8 Remarkable! Anticipating the annoying ♖d7 and especially threatening to relieve the pressure with the much desired ...c6-c5. A tempting try perhaps, but after White's reply this hope is short-lived and the bishop is essentially buried. 24...♖a6 was a much better option, when after 25.♗c5 the bishop can be transferred with 25...♗c8. **25.♗c5 ♖b8 26.a3 e5 27.e3 e4 28.♗e2 ♖b7 29.♖c4 ♖xc4 30.♗xc4 ♔g7 31.a4**

'A delicious grind, which made Anish Giri tweet: 'I wish I was Onischuk today.'

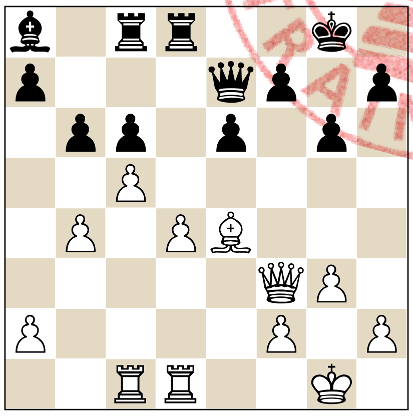
And Kramnik sailed to another smooth victory in this tournament.

Amazingly, you can easily dig up more examples of top-level players being lured into playing their bishop to the safe a8-square. Kramnik, for example, may have thought back to his sweet victory over Judit Polgar from Dortmund 1997. Especially to this moment:



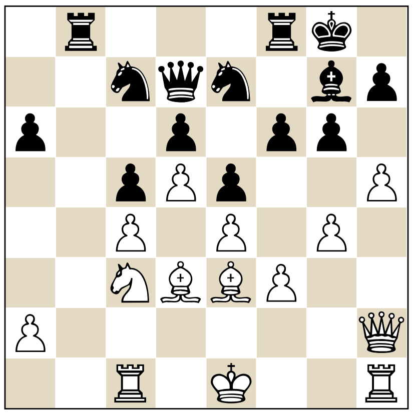
Kramnik-Polgar
Dortmund 1997
position after 14.♕a4

14...♗a8?! Black's defence is not easy. The text-move may be the natural way to protect the a7-pawn but the bishop is obviously not likely to emerge quickly from here. Retreating with 14...♖a8 is a tough decision to make, but at least Black has the plan of ...♕c7, ...b5 and ...a5 to follow up with. **15.e4 dxe4 16.♘xe4 ♘xe4 17.♗xe4 ♖fd8 18.♖fd1 ♕c7 19.b4 g6 20.♕a3 ♕e7 21.♕f3**



And White eventually won on the kingside – another typical way to exploit your opponent's piece being off-side.

This is exactly the technique you may use when your opponent's King's Indian bishop has not fulfilled its promise. Be sure to check Van Wely-Kozul, Reykjavik 2015, or:



Andersson-Szabo
Wijk aan Zee 1973
position after 21...f6

22.h6 First burying the bishop. **22...♗h8 23.♕c2** And immediately Andersson diverts his attention to the other side, where he makes grateful use of the open b-file to exchange some of Black's active pieces. **23...♖b7 24.♖b1 ♖fb8 25.♔f2 ♔f7 26.♖xb7 ♖xb7 27.♖b1 ♕c8 28.♖xb7 ♕xb7 29.♕b3 ♕xb3 30.axb3 g5** 30...f5 31.exf5 gxf5 32.gxf5 ♗f6 33.♔g2 will not be sufficient either. **31.♘a4 ♘g8 32.b4 cxb4 33.♗b6 ♘e8 34.c5 dxc5 35.♗xc5 ♘xh6 36.♗c4 ♔g6 37.d6 ♘xd6 38.♗xd6 a5 39.♘c5 ♗g7** It moves again: but where next? **40.♗e6 ♘f7 41.♗e7 ♘h8 42.♘b7 h5 43.♘xa5 h4 44.♗xb4 ♔h6 45.♗f5 ♘g6 46.♘c6** 1-0.

My advice: Think twice before backing your bishop into a corner! ■

Sadler on Books

Improving
by understanding your weak points

No frivolous opening books, no entertaining biographies. **MATTHEW SADLER** wants you to roll up your sleeves and get down to work!

We start off with Mark Dvoretsky's latest instructional book *Recognizing Your Opponent's Resources – Developing Preventive Thinking*. The cover page doesn't look too much like a chess book and the title is pretty striking (as is the quote on the back cover in big red letters: 'Know thy enemy'), so while reading it in the train, I've noticed a lot of business people trying to get a better look at it. They're presumably wondering whether this is the latest hard-ass management self-help book they just have to get! Or maybe they're just confused why that bald guy in a suit is swearing to himself so often under his breath. Dvoretsky sets 477 exercises with the purpose of increasing your awareness of the opponent's possibilities in a position. He divides this topic into four categories (each explained in a short 10-page introduction):

1. Pay Attention to your Opponent's resources (the opponent puts up strong resistance to your plans)
2. The Process of Elimination (making a choice by working out which of the possibilities *doesn't* lose immediately)
3. Traps (working out what cunning pitfall the opponent has set for you)
4. Prophylactic Thinking (anticipating your opponent's ideas and planning accordingly)

To be honest, I was a little doubtful about how a puzzle book like this would work. After all, the reason things go wrong during a game is that we get carried away by our own plans and forget to check what the opponent is doing. If you're warned in advance that there is something in the position, then it's child's play to see it. So how challenging could these exercises be? And would they really be useful as a training tool?

I've nearly finished the first chapter's exercises and it's been a very interesting experience. Quite apart from anything else there are some really nice positions to enjoy as Dvoretsky – as always – mixes up episodes from practical play and beautiful studies. For me, the first 80 or 90 out of 180 went pretty well with just a couple of accidents. The further the chapter has gone along though, the more often I've ended up saying 'Huh? There's no resources here for the opponent! What does he mean??' I've been turning with ever-increasing dread to the solutions section to see my chosen continuation explained as 'Grandmaster X chose (this) but he had missed that...' Hence the aforementioned swearing!

Whenever I talk with enthusiasm about this type of training in which gloom and disappointment play a major role – my regular 15-minute training games against Smallfish on my phone also come to mind – people often ask me what the value of depressing yourself can possibly be. The best explanation of this I've read is in the book 'Bounce – The myth of talent and the power of practice' by Matthew Syed (a former world-class table-tennis player) in a little section on 'Doublethink'.

The term was introduced by Orwell of course, who defined it as 'the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them... To forget any fact that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just so long as it is needed... all this is indispensably necessary'.

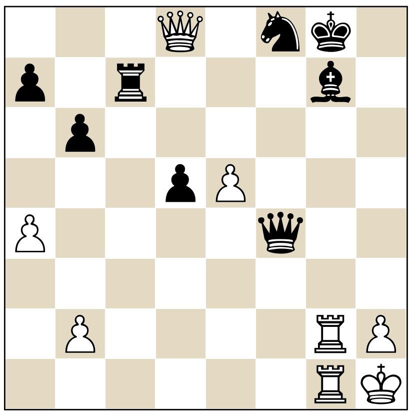
In a sporting context, it is the ability of a sportsman to acknowledge his weaknesses and to draw the illogical conclusion from this evaluation that he's a fantastic player. Syed: 'Take top golfers again: they have to make scrupulously rational choices about shot selection (laying up for example, rather than going for the green), but once they have committed to any given shot, they have to be – indeed they train themselves to be – irrationally optimistic about execution. Nick Faldo, the six-time major winner, made precisely this point when I interviewed him at the Open Championship in 2008. "You have to be very

‘Actually, that emotion is a real part of the improvement process – if you’ve suffered or exulted over a position, you never forget it.’

calculating in selecting the right shot”, he said. “You have to make a decision based upon a realistic assessment of your own weakness and the scope for failure. But once you have committed to your decision, you have to flick the mental switch and execute the shot as if there was never any doubt that you would nail it.” Syed also quotes Arsène Wenger, the Arsenal manager, who put it this way: “Unless you have the ability to manipulate your beliefs over the performance cycle, it is difficult to perform well at anything, sport or otherwise.” ’

You can’t improve unless you understand your weak points and rub your own nose in them by constantly failing at them in practice. However, an essential part of being able to cope with that psychologically is the ability to draw an excessive amount of comfort and pleasure from the few successes that you do have. And judging by the way I feel after solving one of Dvoretsky’s more difficult puzzles, I’ve got that skill right! Actually, that emotion is a real part of the improvement process – if you’ve suffered or exulted over a position, you never forget it.

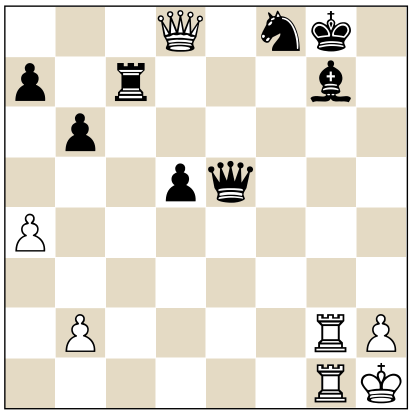
So, time for some chess now. First of all, here’s a couple I didn’t manage to solve properly...



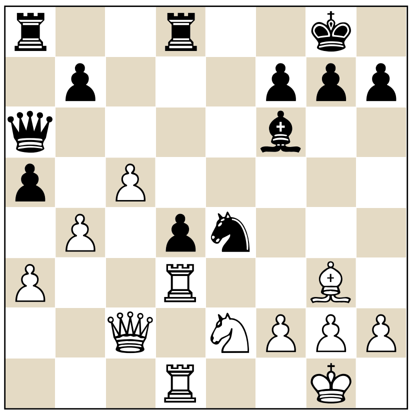
Klinger-Blatny
Bad Wörishofen 1988
position after 35.♕d8

White had been completely winning but – I guess in a mutual time-scramble – had rather overdone things. Dvoretsky posed the question here: what should Black play? This was one of the positions where I must have stared at it for 5 minutes without realising what White’s idea was after 35...♕xe5. Can you do better? (Just like Klinger did!)

35...♕xe5



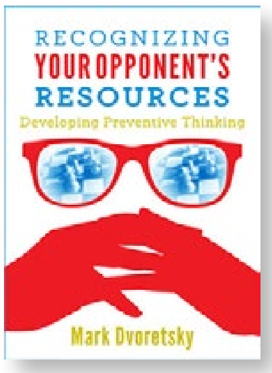
36.♕b8!! Ouch! What a move! White is just winning. **36...♕e7 37.♖xg7+ ♕xg7 38.♕xc7** 1-0.



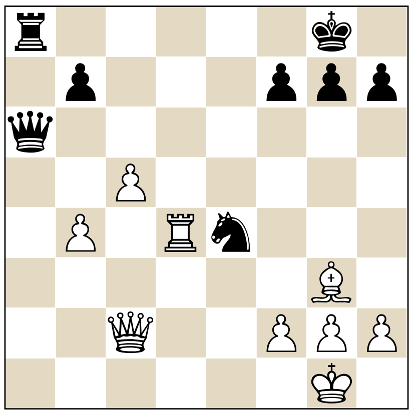
Glek-Averkin
Soviet Union 1983
position after 22...♕a6

Dvoretsky asked here why White could not take the pawn on d4 with 23.♘xd4 ? You notice with a lot of Dvoretsky’s puzzles in this chapter that the correct idea is often not that difficult to find, but he usually has a little moment where additional precision in calculation is required.

Recognizing Your Opponent’s Resources
by Mark Dvoretsky
Russell Enterprises, 2015
★★★★☆



23.♘xd4 23.♗c7 ♖dc8 24.♗xa5 ♘xc5 25.bxc5 ♕xa5 26.♘xd4 ♕xc5 was the drawn conclusion of the game. **23...axb4 24.axb4 ♗xd4 25.♖xd4 ♖xd4 26.♖xd4**



26...♘c3!! White cannot stop the dual threat of ...♕a1+ and ...♘e2+. 26...♕a1+? was my solution, with the idea of 27.♖d1 ♘c3, but... 27.♕d1! ♘c3 28.♖d8+ ♖xd8 29.♕xa1 wins for White.

In that last case, it was quite interesting for me to think why I’d missed White’s resource. In this case, I think I didn’t fully appreciate where the difficulty of the solution lay. After spotting the main idea pretty instantaneously (it’s not difficult of course), I spent some time conscientiously checking whether 23...axb4 first was the most accurate move order (could White do something else against the loose knight on e4 and might 23...♗xd4 be more accurate?) and rounded off with a little time checking / believing that after 27.♖d1 ♘c3,

White didn't have a single option along the back rank to save himself. Obviously my checking mechanism didn't pick up on all the crucial episodes in the combination, which is why I skipped checking anything on the 26th move. You can't draw any conclusions from 1 position, but it made me alert to a possible repetition of this shortcoming in future positions.
All in all, a tough but worthwhile read that has given me a few downs but many more ups (doublethink again!) Recommended!

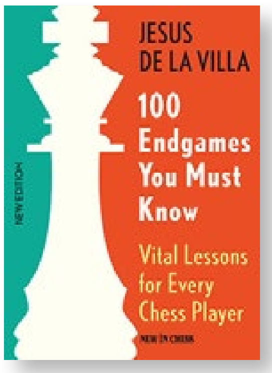
* * *

There's something about titles like Jesus de la Villa's *100 Endgames You Must Know* that has me breaking out in a cold sweat before I open it. I'm a Grandmaster for heaven's sake – I have to know everything in this otherwise I'm not worth my title! This is the 4th edition of this work and there's not much to say about it – you just have to buy it and read it! De la Villa does a truly wonderful job of explaining useful endgames in a calm and measured manner that is clear enough for any strength of player to understand while still being interesting for stronger players. If you've never read an endgame book before, this is the one you should start with. In particular, I can recommend the sections on rook plus f- and h-pawns against rook and on opposite-coloured bishops.

* * *

Mastering Chess Middlegames sounded pretty promising, as I'm always keen on chess manuals by Russian coaches. Alexander Panchenko died in 2009 (at the young age of 56) so this book is actually a compilation of his training material and lectures by some of his pupils (both Timofeev and Rublevsky have written forewords to the book). The book is collected into 12 chapters with titles such as 'The attack on the king', 'Equal positions', 'Same-coloured bishops'. Each chapter presents a set of positions, lightly annotated, illustrating different facets of the theme with exercises at the end to test the reader.

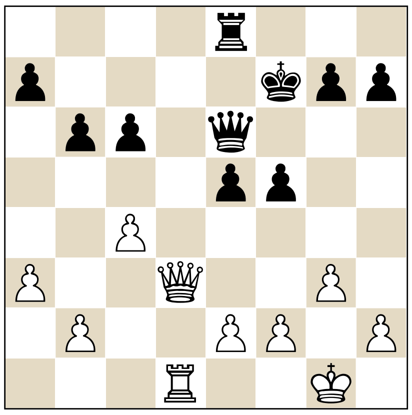
100 Endgames You Must Know
by Jesus de la Villa
New In Chess,
2015
★★★★★


JESUS DE LA VILLA
100 Endgames You Must Know
Vital Lessons for Every Chess Player
NEW IN CHESS
NEW EDITION

Such collections of material are always interesting and I spent some enjoyable time browsing through the book, but I think that avid readers might be a little disappointed. The examples that are used to illustrate the themes are very familiar and I would estimate that I had seen more than 90% of the material before.

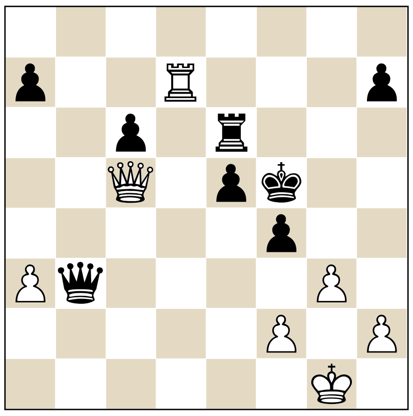
Many of these examples have been annotated in much greater detail in other volumes and if you're used to the depth and quality of a Dvoretsky or Aagaard, then you may feel a little short-changed here.

One interesting position I hadn't come across before was this ♕+♖ ending of Alekhine's. I recently reviewed Mihail Marin's superb book in which he dedicated a whole chapter to Alekhine's handling of this material balance. This example was one he didn't cover – it's not the most convincing of his ♕+♖ endings – but it's fun to notice a theme Marin highlighted: the switch of the queen from one side to the other as a means of exposing the weakness of the opposing king.

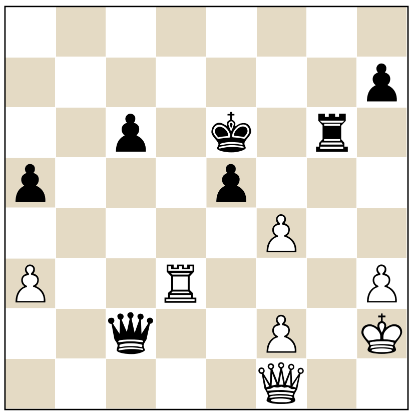


Alekhine-Lokvenc
Prague 1943
position after 26...♔f7

White has a slight advantage due to his control of the d-file. I like the way in which Alekhine starts off by trying to ruin the Black structure in order to provide extra entry points.
27.e4 g6 28.b3 ♔f6 29.c5 bxc5 30.exf5 gxf5 31.♕e3 f4 32.♕xc5 ♕xb3 33.♖d6+ ♖e6 34.♖d7 ♔f5

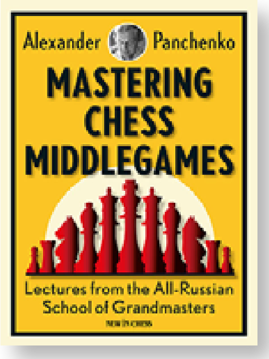


The last couple of moves from Alekhine weren't the best and now 35.♕f8+ ♖f6 36.g4+ ♔xg4 37.♕xf6 ♕b1+ is only a draw. So Alekhine comes up with a cunning queen manoeuvre to keep things alive. It's risky though as it's not easy to play around the black queen, which covers most of the squares from which White's queen could attack the black king.
35.♕c1 a5 36.♕f1 ♖h6
Covering the threat of ♕h3+. The imperturbable engine says 0.00 but I could imagine feeling a touch nervous with Black!
37.h3 ♔e6 38.♖d3 ♕c2 39.gxf4 ♖g6+ 40.♔h2

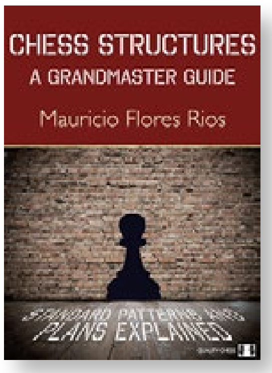


Funnily enough, the engine now assesses 40...♖f6 as better for Black, so it seems that Alekhine rather overdid things! After the move in the game,

Mastering Chess Middlegames
by Alexander Panchenko
New In Chess, 2015
★★★☆☆


Alexander Panchenko
MASTERING CHESS MIDDLEGAMES
Lectures from the All-Russian School of Grandmasters
NEW IN CHESS

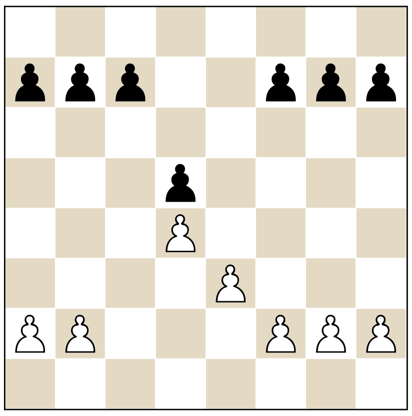
Chess Structures: A Grandmaster Guide
by Mauricio Flores Rios
Quality Chess, 2015
★★★★☆



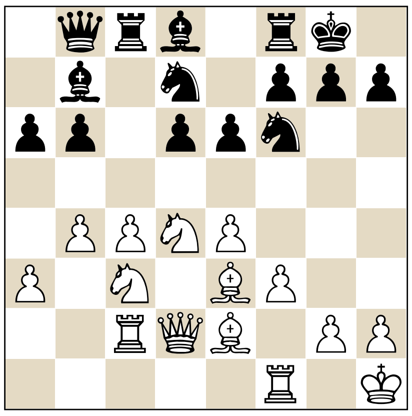
Alekhine started to reassert control and won in 72 moves.

■ ■ ■

And finally we get to *Chess Structures – A Grandmaster Guide* by the Chilean Grandmaster Mauricio Flores Rios. In 22 chapters, Rios deals with interesting positions arising from pretty much every pawn structure that can arise in a game of chess. For example, the Hedgehog, Stonewall structures and all types of Benoni structures, to name but a few. Essentially it's Rios' own view on all these structures. It's an extremely ambitious project and as you can imagine, it's a bit uneven in quality. To start with a gripe (well I'm a lifelong 1.d4 player so this was one of the first chapters I looked at), the chapter on the Carlsbad structure...



...is just 15 pages and in my opinion doesn't get to the essence of these positions at all. I still vividly remember asking Mark Dvoretsky about these structures and getting a 5-minute masterclass on the Minority Attack that just blew me away (I included it in my own book on the QGD many years ago). However, there is also masses of stuff in the book which made me go 'Oooh!' and 'Aaah!' so I think it will have the same effect on you! In particular, I loved Rios' exposition of White's plan of exerting queenside pressure against Hedgehog systems. I'd seen one of the games he quotes in his chapter but I'd never remotely made any link to a structured way of fighting the Hedgehog structure, so this chapter was a real eye-opener for me. Let's just take one game from that chapter to show you:



Flores Rios-Hayrapetian
Barcelona 2013
position after 16.♖c2

Rios starts to erect the piece set-up he recommends against the Hedgehog:

1. The rooks go to the b- and c-files to support either the b4-b5 or the c4-c5 breaks.

2. The bishops on e2 and g1. The bishop on g1 covers h2 against a ♕b8/♗c7 battery along the b8-h2 diagonal.

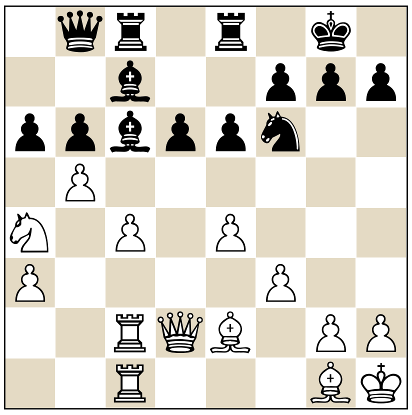
3. White knights on d4, a4 or d3, ideally supporting his centre and queenside breaks. See how effective this is in the game.

16...♗c7 17.♗g1 Rios also does some big analysis of the immediate 17.b5, aiming to sacrifice a pawn for big compensation after 17...a5 18.♘c6 ♗xc6 19.bxc6 ♘e5 20.♘b5. As in the game, the knight on b5 is extremely painful for Black.

17...♖fe8 18.♘a4 ♘e5 19.♖fc1

A slight diversion from the plan, but the rook can always go to b1 later!

19...♘c6 20.♘xc6 ♗xc6 21.b5



Rios: 'Many players unconsciously disregard this break in their calculations as it has a rather anti-positional appearance. Nevertheless this is a perfect opportunity to execute this break as the b6- and d6-pawns will become vulnerable rather quickly. Black will have to give up material.'

21...♗a8 22.bxa6

A white rook is coming to the b-file now to target the new weakness on b6: the first advantage of playing b5xa6.

22...♘d7 23.♖b1 ♕a7 24.♘c3

The second advantage of b5xa6: the white knight gets an outpost on b5 that is rather excruciating for Black: after all, he set up his pawns in a Hedgehog structure to stop White's pieces getting to squares like that!

24...♘c5 25.♘b5 ♕xa6 26.♘xc7 ♖xc7 27.♕xd6 ♖c6 28.♕d2

The rest is a matter of (good) technique.

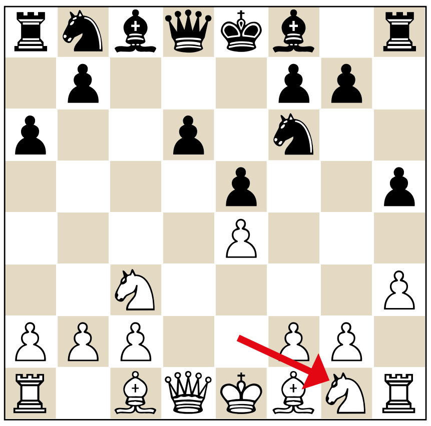
28...f5 29.e5 ♕a7 30.♖d1 ♕c7 31.♕d4 ♗b7 32.♖cd2 ♗c8 33.♕h4 h6 34.♕f4 g5 35.♕e3 ♘b7 36.♕c3 ♖e7 37.a4 ♘c5 38.♖d6 ♘xa4 39.♕b4 ♘c5 40.♖xc6 ♕xc6 41.♖d6 ♕c7 42.♖xb6 ♘b7 43.c5 ♕xe5 44.♗a6 ♖d7 45.♗xb7 ♖d1 46.♖d6 ♖a1 47.♕d4 ♖xg1+ 48.♕xg1 1-0.

In conclusion, warmly recommended. Lots to learn! And now that's enough self-improvement for me. I'm hoping for some weird opening books next month! ■

SECRETS OF
OPENING
SURPRISES

Back to square one in the Najdorf

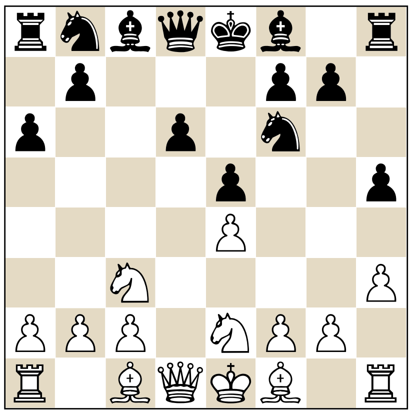
JEROEN BOSCH



8.♘g1!?

> 'For now it is sufficient to observe that with 7½ out of 8 White hasn't done so badly with this eccentric knight retreat.'

This SOS covers a surprising knight retreat in a popular line against the Najdorf Variation. After **1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6, 6.h3** is Fischer's surprising line (3 out of 3 in 1962!), which is often attributed to another American: Weaver Adams, who played it in the 1940s. The modest-looking pawn move has become quite popular again in this millennium. Interestingly enough, the typical Najdorf move **6...e5** could still be dubbed 'dubious' by Nunn and Gallagher in their 1998 Najdorf Bible (*The Complete Najdorf: Modern Lines*) because of **7.♘de2**, intending g4, ♗g2 and ♘g3 to gain a tempo on the 6.g3 e5 line. Such are the quirks of fashion! Indeed, these days 6...e5 is deemed an excellent response to 6.h3 due to the modern follow-up 7...h5!?. Just as in many other Najdorf lines, Black voluntarily weakens the g5-square in order to prevent g4.



Now White can play for a direct bind on the d5-square with 8.♗g5 ♗e6 9.♗xf6 ♕xf6 10.♘d5 ♕d8 11.♘ec3, although practice has shown that Black is OK here, which is why 8.g3 is more popular these days, as for example in Caruana-Vachier Lagrave, Stavanger 2015, where play continued 8...♗e6 9.♗g2 b5 10.0-0 ♘bd7 11.♗e3. This column is not about such well-trodden paths, though, which is why I want to take a look at the stunning **8.♘g1!?**

Wow, that's playing the king's knight for the fourth time in eight moves, just to move it back to square 1! And then, White will have to move the steed a fifth time to bring it back to f3. So if f3 is such a great square: why didn't White put it there on move 7? The answer, obviously, is that in that case Black would not have weakened the g5-square with ...h5.

But is that really worth all the hassle and moving about? Well, let's find out! As you know, there are 'lies, damned lies and statistics', so for now it is sufficient to observe that with 7½ out of 8 White hasn't done so badly with this eccentric knight retreat. And, by the way, to give you one clue: White's main idea is for his knight to go to g5, not his bishop!

Game 1

Jean-Noel Riff
Luc Leriche
Montpellier 2015

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.h3 e5

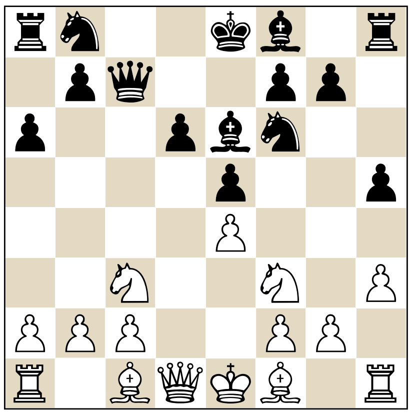
NEW IN CHESS TRAINING

7.♘de2 h5 8.♘g1!?

Let's start with the logical **8...♗e6** to illustrate one of White's main ideas after 8.♘g1.

After 8...♕c7 9.♘f3 ♘bd7 White also goes 10.♘g5! b5?! 11.a4! b4? 12.♘d5 ♘xd5 13.♕xd5 ♘b6 14.♕b3 d5 (14...a5?? 15.♗b5+; 14...f6 15.a5) 15.a5 ♘c4 16.exd5 ♘d6 17.♗d3, with an extra pawn in a superior position; Hernandez Sanchez-Munoz, Bogota 2015.

9.♘f3 ♕c7

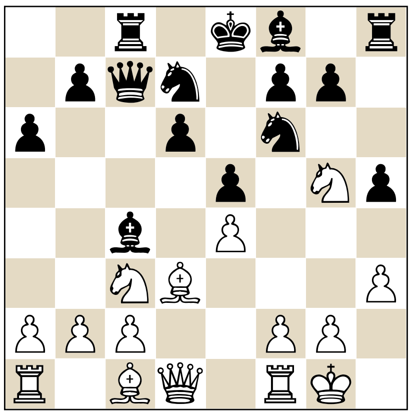


10.♘g5! Yep, that's it! Rather than playing the bishop to this square to strengthen his control of d5, White is sticking his knight into the hole, attacking e6 (and, as we will see later on in this game, sometimes f7 as well).

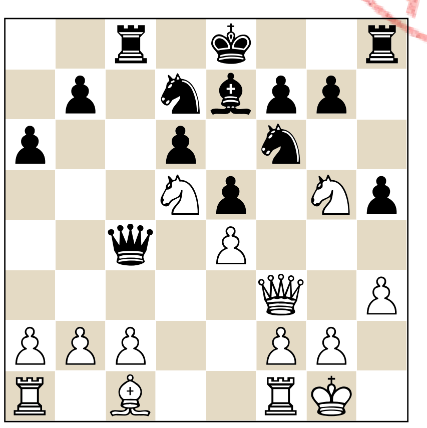
10...♗c4 Perhaps Black is best advised to ignore the attack on his bishop with 10...♗e7 or 10...♘c6, but it is annoying that White can take on e6 whenever he likes.

11.♗d3 ♘bd7 If Black takes on d3 then there is no doubt that White is up for preference after say 11...♗xd3 12.cxd3 ♗e7 13.0-0 0-0 14.♗e3 ♘c6 15.♖c1.

12.0-0 ♖c8



and now: **13.♗e3 ♗e7 14.♕f3 0-0 15.♖ad1 b5 16.a3** gave White a tiny edge in the game. Stronger, however, would have been **13.♗xc4 ♕xc4 14.♕f3**, with the idea that after 14...♗e7 White has 15.♘d5!



and Black is in trouble, since he cannot castle now. Nor can he take on d5, obviously, because of the vulnerable f7-square. After 15...♗d8 16.b3 ♕c6 (16...♕xc2 17.♗a3 virtually wins for White) 17.c4 White has a strong bind.

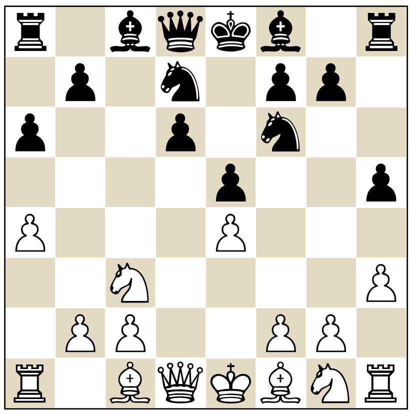
Game 2

Alexander Shabalov
Abhijeet Gupta
Dubai 2015

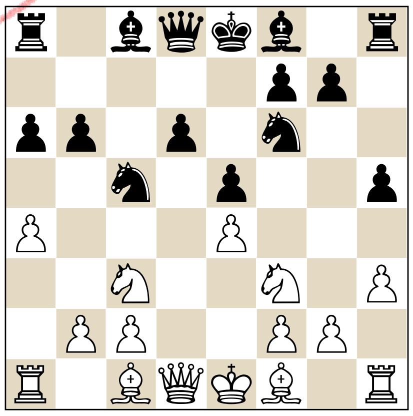
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e3 ♘g4 7.♗c1 ♘f6

In this game, Shabalov takes not developing to an extreme! But in all seriousness, after this well-known intermezzo by means of which White indicates that he does not feel like playing 7.♗g5 h6 8.♗h4 g5 9.♗g3 ♗g7 and so on, we return to our subject with two extra moves.

8.h3 e5 9.♘de2 h5 10.♘g1!? ♘bd7 11.a4 Another plausible line is 11.♘f3 b5 12.♗g5 ♗e7 13.a4 b4 14.♘d5 ♗b7 (14...♘xd5 15.♕xd5 ♖b8) 15.♗c4, with equal chances.



11...♕c7 Practice has also seen 11...b6?! 12.♘f3 (also interesting is 12.♗c4!? ♗b7 13.♘f3, when 13...♘xe4 fails to 14.♘xe4 ♗xe4 15.♗xf7+!±) 12...♘c5



13.♗g5 (I much prefer 13.♘g5! ♗e7 14.♗c4, with an edge for White) 13...♗b7 14.♘d2 ♖c8, Kulaots-Krupenski, Viljandi 2015, and Black had counterplay, as the positionally desirable 15.♗c4 (15.♗e2 was played in the game) can be met by 15...♘cxe4 16.♘cxe4 ♗xe4 17.♗xf6 (17.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 18.♘xe4 d5, unclear) 17...gxf6 18.♘xe4 ♖xc4 19.♕d3 d5! (19...♖d4 20.♕f3=) when 20.♕xd5 ♕xd5 21.♘xf6+ ♔d8 22.♘xd5 ♖xc2 is an equal ending.

Black may consider 11...♘c5, which is often a bad move in view of the characteristic 12.♗g5 ♗e7 13.♗xf6 ♗xf6, and White controls square d5; but it must be admitted that White is a little slow in developing – food for thought!

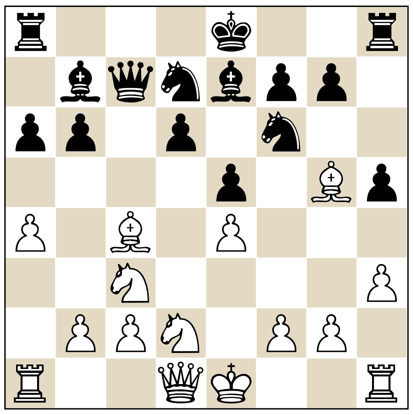
14.♗c4 looks a tad more pleasant for White.

12.♘f3 ♗e7 13.♗g5 Again 13.♘g5!? looks tempting and is the best move.

13...b6 14.♘d2

Another knight move, but this comes with a well-known plan to control the central light squares (e4, d5 and c4).

14...♗b7 15.♗c4



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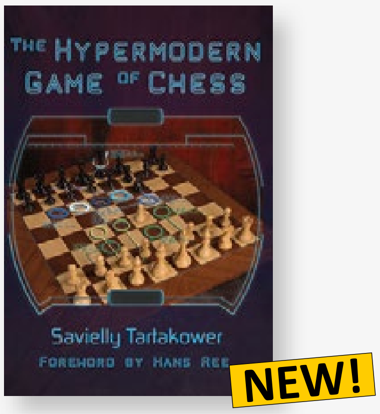

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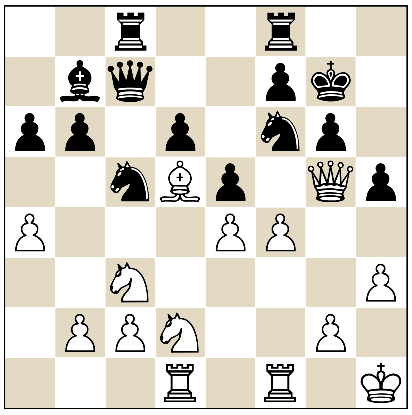
15...0-0 Black is also worse after 15...♘xe4 16.♘cxe4! f6 17.♗e2! fxg5 18.♗xh5+ ♔f8 19.c4, and although the engines are not yet convinced, this looks better for White.

16.0-0 g6?! 17.♕e2 ♔g7 18.♔h1!? White can also play for full control of square d5 with 18.♖fd1, preparing moves like ♗xf6, ♗d5 or ♘d5, and ♘d2-f1-e3.

18...♘g8 19.♗e3 ♘gf6 20.♖ad1 Shabalov leaves the king's rook on f1 to support a possible f2-f4 advance.

20...♘c5 21.♗g5 ♖ac8 22.♕e3 ♘g8! 23.♗d5 ♗xg5 24.♕xg5 ♘f6 25.f4



Black has managed to trade the dark-squared bishops and is only slightly worse.

25...♗xd5

White is also slightly better after 25...♘xd5 26.exd5 f6 27.♕g3 f5 28.♘f3 e4 29.♘g5.

26.exd5 e4? This is a mistake. White gets to push his f-pawn forward, while the black e-pawn becomes weak.

27.f5! ♖ce8 28.♘c4 e3 29.♘xe3 ♘ce4 30.♘xe4 ♘xe4 31.♕f4

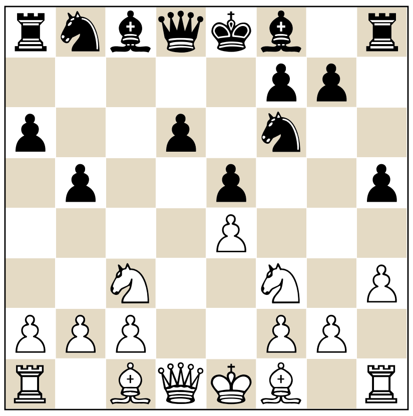
And White was a sound pawn up.

Game 3

Ian Nepomniachtchi
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Beijing blitz 2014

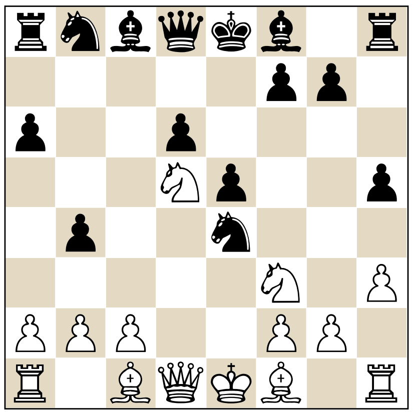
Please note that this was a blitz game, which takes nothing away from White's brilliant idea on move 12. This was also the stem game of 8.♘g1.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.h3 e5 7.♘de2 h5 8.♘g1 b5 9.♘f3



9...♗b7

The forcing 9...b4 looks like a mistake, as after 10.♘d5 Black is ill-advised to take on e4 anyway: 10...♘xe4



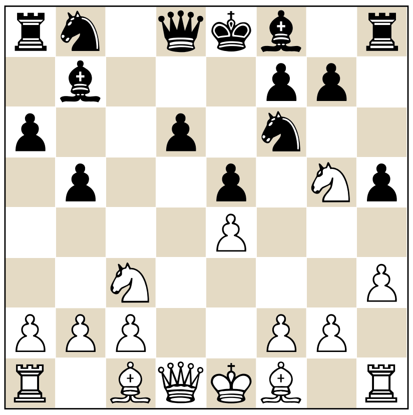
and now:

– 11.♘g5!? ♘xg5 12.♗xg5 ♕xg5 13.♘c7+ ♔d8 14.♘xa8 ♗b7 (14...♘d7 15.♕d5+–) 15.♘b6 ♘d7 16.♘d5, and Black has some compensation for the exchange, although it isn't quite sufficient.

– Playing for compensation for the pawn with 11.♗c4 ♗e7?! 12.♗e3 is perhaps even better for White.

Black can, of course, consider 9...♘bd7.

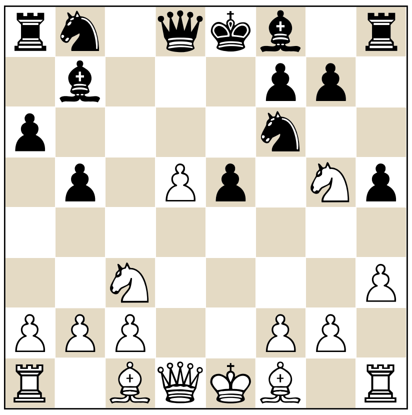
10.♘g5



10...b4 This gives rise to a remarkable reply by Nepo.

NEW IN CHESS TRAINING

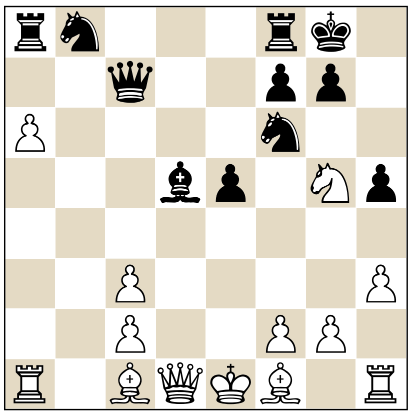
■ After 10...d5 11.exd5 the lines fork:



– 11...♘xd5 12.♗e2 ♗e7 13.♗f3±.

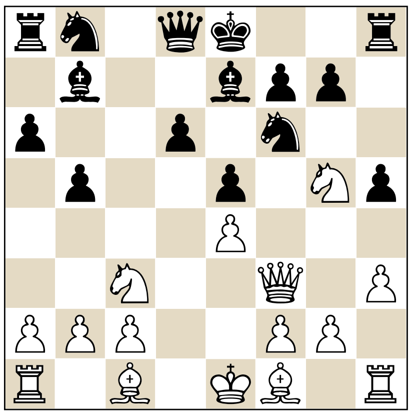
– 11...b4 12.♘a4 ♗xd5 (12...♘xd5 13.♗c4±; 12...♘bd7!? 13.♗c4) 13.c4!±.

– 11...♗b4 12.a3 (12.♗d2) 12...♗xc3+ 13.bxc3 ♗xd5 14.a4! 0-0 (14...♘bd7 15.♗a3!?) 15.axb5 ♕c7 16.bxa6



16...♘bd7 (crucial was 16...♖d8 17.♗d2 e4, and now, if 18.a7 then 18...e3! 19.♗xe3 ♕xc3+ 20.♗d2 ♖e8+ 21.♗e2 ♖xe2+! 22.♔xe2 ♗c4+ 23.♔e1 ♕e5+ 24.♗e3 ♕c3+ forces a repetition) 17.c4 ♗c6 18.♗e3, with a clear edge in Nozdrachev-Doluhanova, Voronezh 2015.

■ Logical is 10...♗e7 11.♕f3?! (11.a3), and now:

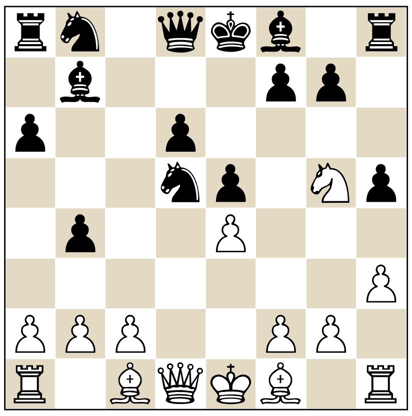


– 11...♘bd7 12.a4 b4 13.♘d5 0-0 14.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 15.♗d3 ♘c5 16.0-0 d5 17.exd5 ♗xd5 18.♕g3 ♘xd3 19.cxd3 ♘d7 favoured Black in Svidler-Sasikiran, Berlin rapid 2015 (White won, though).

– 11...♘c6! 12.♗e3 (12.♗d3) 12...♘d4 13.♗xd4 exd4 14.♘b1 ♖c8 15.♗d3 ♖c5 16.h4 0-0, Narayanan-Marek, Pardubice 2015. Here, too, Black is better, but it was White who went on to score the full point.

Let's return to the game after 10...b4.

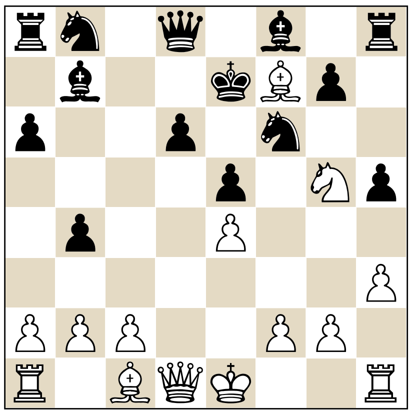
11.♘d5 ♘xd5



12.♗c4! A dangerous sacrifice and much better than 12.exd5 ♗e7, with a comfortable position for Black.

12...♘f6 13.♗xf7+! 13.♘xf7 ♕c7 14.♗b3 is either a repetition or Black can continue by returning some material: 14...♖h6 (14...♕xf7?! 15.♗xf7+ ♔xf7) 15.♘xh6 gxh6.

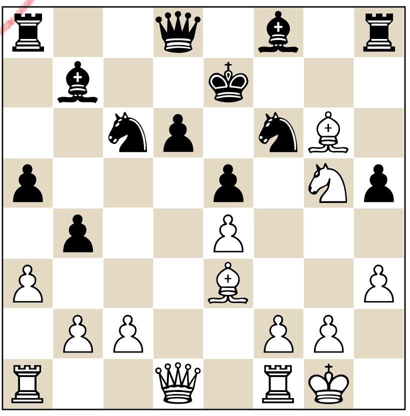
13...♔e7



14.0-0 White certainly has compensation for the piece. There are plenty of alternatives to investigate, by the way: 14.♗e3, 14.c3, 14.♕d3, and 14.♗g6 all come into consideration.

14...♘c6 15.a3 a5 16.♗e3 g6 17.♗xg6

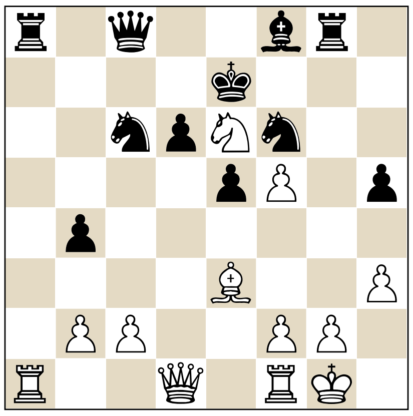
Taking a pawn but opening a file for Black's rook. 17.♗b3!? and 17.c3 are worth considering.



17...♖g8 18.♗f5 18.♗xh5!?. **18...♗c8** Best was 18...♘d4, when Black has good counterplay.

19.axb4 ♗xf5 20.exf5 axb4 21.♘e6 Much stronger was 21.♕d3±. **21...♕c8?**

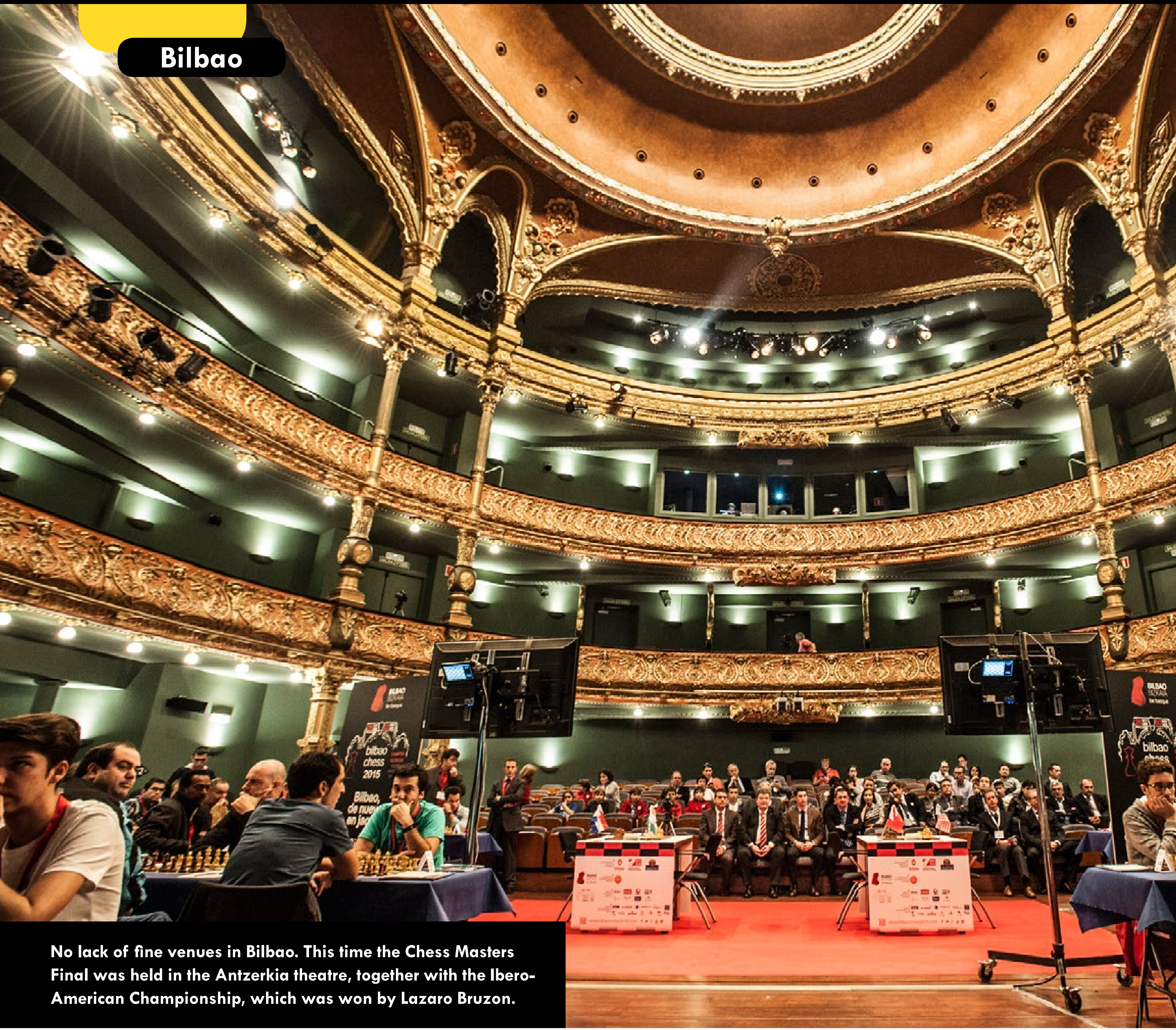
Black could have played 21...♖xa1! 22.♘xd8 ♖xd1 23.♘xc6+ ♔d7 24.♘xe5+ dxe5 25.♖xd1+, when only Black can be better in the endgame; but please remember this was a blitz game! The remaining moves were:



22.♗g5?! 22.♕f3!. **22...♖xa1 23.♕xa1 ♕b7** 23...♖xg5! 24.♘xg5 ♕xf5. **24.h4 ♔f7** White is clearly better now. **25.♕d1 ♘e7??** A horrible blunder. **26.♘d8+** 1-0.

Conclusion

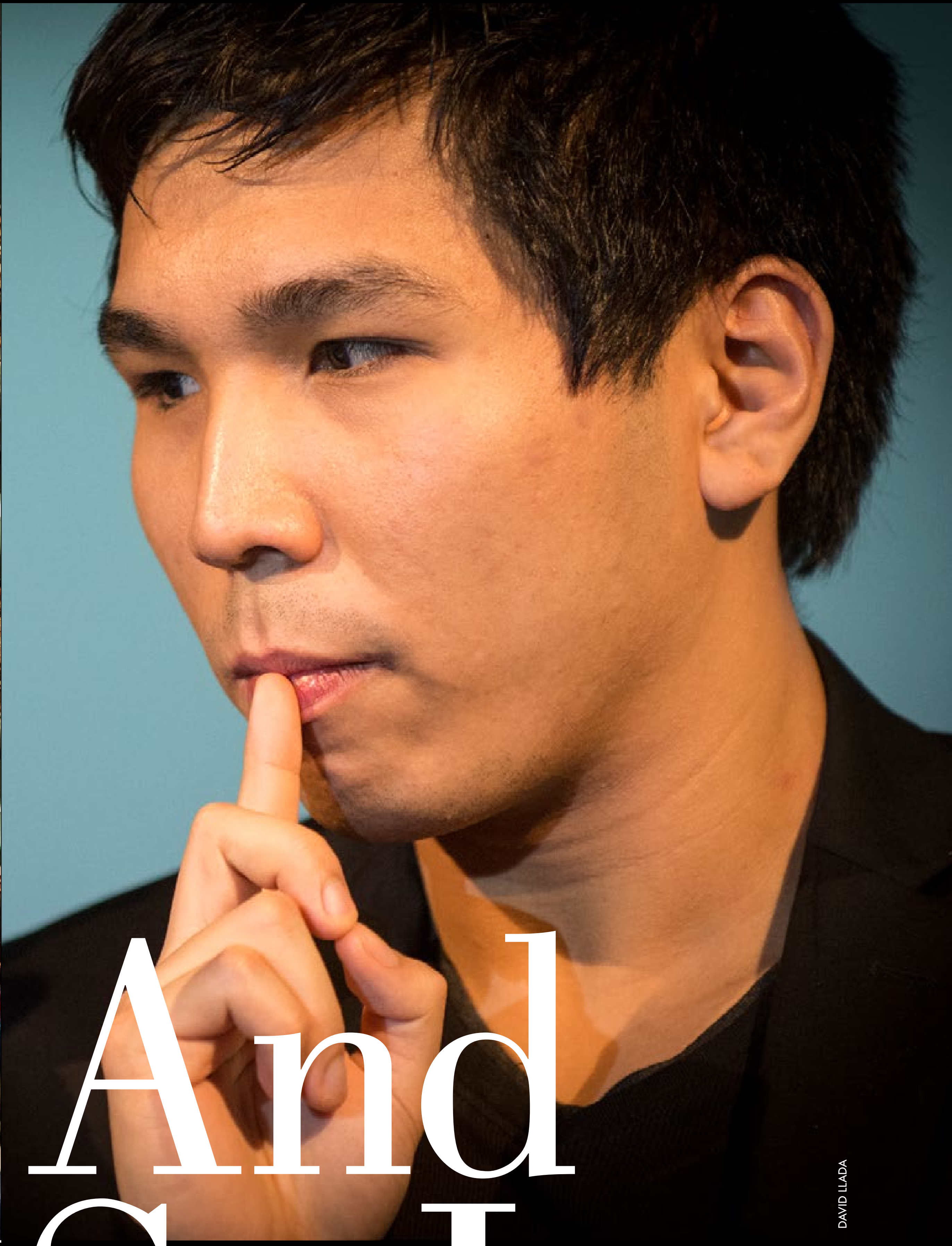
So we have seen that after the weakening 7...h5 it makes sense to move the knight backwards in order to move forwards again! Square g5 is an excellent destination for the knight. It will be interesting to see how this surprising and relatively new idea in a very popular Najdorf line will develop. ■



No lack of fine venues in Bilbao. This time the Chess Masters Final was held in the Antzerkia theatre, together with the Ibero-American Championship, which was won by Lazaro Bruzon.

Although the original idea of the Bilbao Chess Masters Final – annually bringing together the winners of the best tournaments in the world – has long been abandoned, the 2015 edition boasted an attractive elite field with a former World Champion and three youthful top-10 players. A report by the happy winner, **WESLEY SO**, who prevailed in the nervous blitz tiebreaker.

MANU DE ALBA


DAVID LLADA

And So It Was

One of the most amazing things about my chess career is realizing dreams I didn't know I had. The Philippines were colonized by Spain for 400 years, so our culture has a lot of Hispanic influences. When I was a kid, Chorizo de Bilbao, Jamon Serrano, Candied Chestnuts, Turron Duro would appear in the exclusive shops of Manila around Christmas time. Although these foods fascinated me, I never thought I would ever taste them. Only certain people bought these things. They were imported from Spain and very costly.

Last October I was invited to Spain to compete in the Bilbao Chess Masters tournament. Guess what I ate every day for two weeks. Just for the record, they taste wonderful! And I discovered other mouth-watering treats which can be described in one word: pinchos.

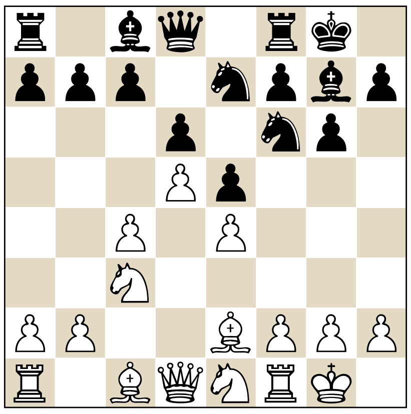
Bilbao is a clean and safe city with neighbourhood parks every two streets. There are people everywhere all the time. Exploring the city, we felt totally at ease. All day and night, whatever the time – there are always people in the streets having fun and doing mainly two things: eating and talking. Because we had arrived a few days early, we had the opportunity to bond with this relaxed culture, which was a good thing, because tough times were ahead. My first game could not be a warm-up. I was facing China's Number One. The fearsome Ding Liren.

KI 2.1 – E99
Wesley So
Ding Liren
Bilbao 2015 (1)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6

The King's Indian! The opening in which computers cannot be completely relied upon. I was hoping Ding would go for it, although he has started playing more solid openings recently, such as the Queen's Gambit Declined.

5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘e1

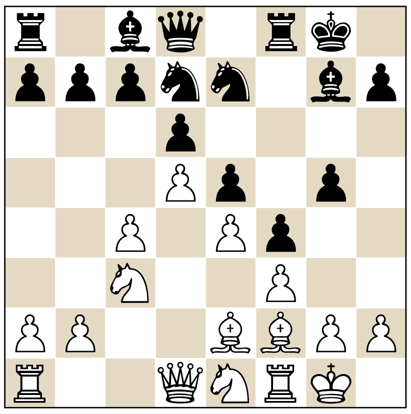


> 'The King's Indian! The opening in which computers cannot be completely relied upon.'

I have some experience with this variation. In fact, Ding and I had a theoretical discussion on this back in 2011, which ended in a draw.

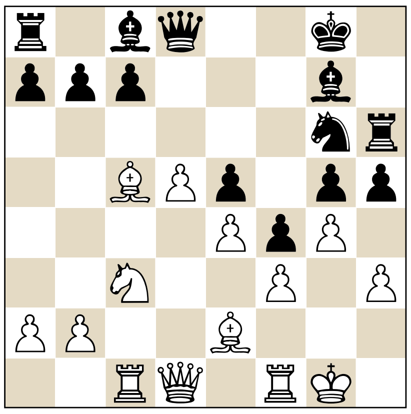
9...♘d7 10.♗e3 f5 11.f3 f4 12.♗f2 g5

The good thing about 9.♘e1 is that almost everything from Black is forced. He doesn't really have many alternatives to choose from.

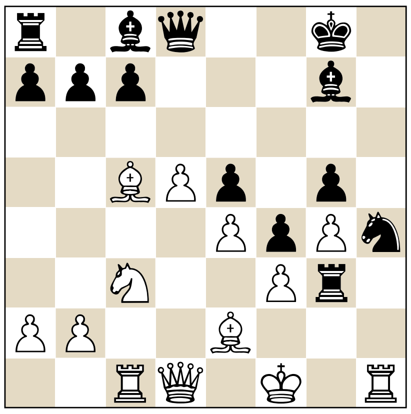


13.♖c1

In my afore-mentioned game against Ding at the 2011 Khanty-Mansiysk World Cup, I played 13.g4, and there followed 13...h5 14.h3 ♖f6 15.♘d3 ♖h6 16.c5 ♘xc5 17.♘xc5 dxc5 18.♗xc5 ♘g6 19.♖c1 19...hxg4 20.hxg4 ♖h3 21.♔g2 ♖g3+ 22.♔f2 ♘h4 23.♖g1 ♖h3 24.♖h1 ♖g3 25.♔f1



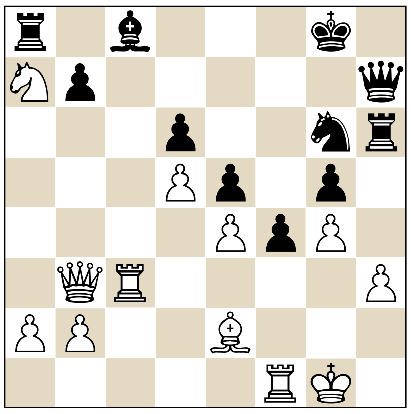
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

25...♗f8 (in my second game, against a Chinese IM, my opponent did not fare any better: 25...a6 26.d6 cxd6 27.♗f2 ♗e6 28.♘d5 ♗xd5 29.♕xd5+ ♔h7 30.♕xb7 ♔g6 31.♖c7 ♗f6 32.♗c4 – threatening ♖g7 check! – 32...♕f8 33.♗e6, and White won, So-Wan Yunguo, Ho Chi Minh City 2012) 26.♗f2 a6 27.♗xg3 fxg3 28.♖g1 ♕f6 29.♖xg3 ♕f4 30.♕e1 ♗d6, and Black does not have enough for the exchange, but Ding managed to draw anyway.

Last year in Wijk aan Zee, Loek van Wely showed the best way to equalize: 19...♗f8! (instead of 19...hxg4) 20.♘b5 ♗d6 (even better is 20...hxg4 21.hxg4 ♗d6, to open the h-file) 21.♕b3 hxg4 22.fxg4 (22.hxg4 ♖h3 gives Black scary ideas like ...♗xg4 and ...♘h4) 22...♕e7 23.♗xd6 cxd6 24.♘xa7 ♕h7 25.♖c3. Black has enough counterplay here, and both ... ♖xa7 and ...♘e7 should be sufficient.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Instead, Loek sacrificed another pawn: 25...f3 26.♗xf3 ♗d7 27.♕xb7 ♖f8

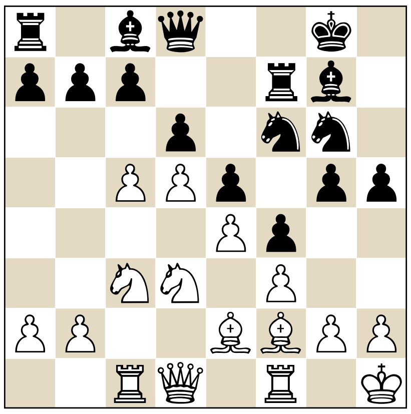
W. So
ELO 2760
L. Ding
ELO 2782
Bilbao
BFA
DFB

DAVID LLADA

Wesley So had been hoping that Ding Liren would go for the King's Indian and a King's Indian it was. In a big fight he managed to beat the Chinese number one.

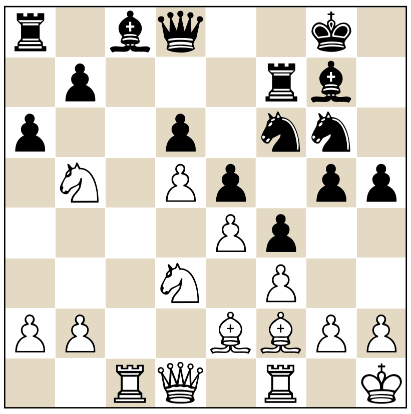
28.♗g2 ♘f4 29.♖xf4 exf4 (29...gxf4! is better; always capture towards the centre!) 30.♘c6 ♕g7, after which White is better and I later won the game after further mistakes by both sides.

Two months before Bilbao, in St. Louis, I went 13.♘d3 against Hikaru Nakamura, but later mixed up my preparation and lost quickly: 13...♘g6 14.c5 ♘f6 15.♖c1 ♖f7 16.♔h1 h5



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

17.cxd6?! (in my analysis I was intending 17.♘b5 a6 18.♘a3 g4 (18...b5 19.cxb6! cxb6 20.♘c4, and the white knight isn't cut off!) 19.cxd6 cxd6 20.♘c4, with a complicated position in which White might be better. A sample line is 20...g3 21.♘b6 ♖b8 22.♕c2 ♗d7 23.♘xd7 ♖xd7 24.♗e1 gxh2 25.♔xh2 h4 26.♘f2 ♘h5 27.♖g1 ♘g3 28.♗d3, and White's king is very safe, but it's not very clear how he should proceed. White can put his knight on h3, bishop to f2 and then slowly push his queenside pawns b4-a4-a5, etc.) 17...cxd6 18.♘b5 a6

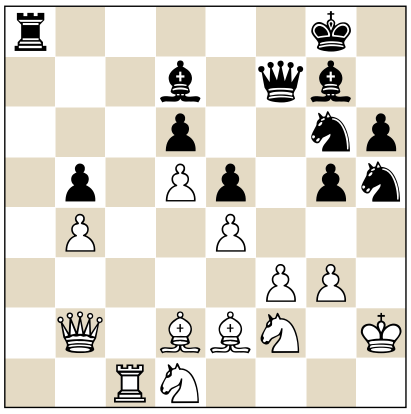


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

19.♘a3? (a further mistake. White's last chance was 19.♘c3, with the idea of going ♘a4 and meeting 19...b5 with 20.a4) 19...b5! Oops! Suddenly White has no queenside attack. The knight on a3 will take too long to be activated. 20.♖c6 g4, and Black launched a fierce attack and won, as you can see in New In Chess 2015/7.

13...♘g6

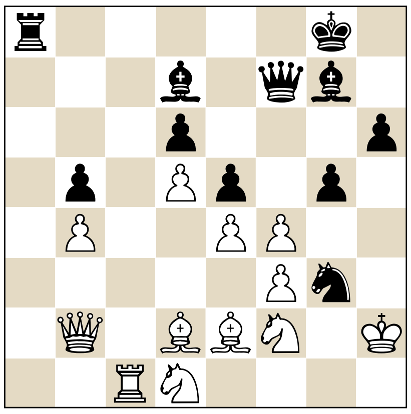
I had a game in 2014 which turned out to be one of my most fascinating games to date: 13...♖f6 14.♘d3 b6 15.b4 a6 16.c5 ♖h6 17.cxd6 cxd6 18.g4!? fxg3 19.hxg3 ♘g6 20.♔g2 ♘f6 21.♖h1 ♖xh1 22.♔xh1 b5 23.♗e3 h6 24.a4 ♗d7 25.axb5 axb5 26.♘f2 ♘h5 27.♔h2 ♖a3 28.♕d2 ♕e8 29.♕b2 ♖a8 30.♗d2 ♕f7 31.♘cd1.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Now this might be a good time to put the magazine down and think for yourself. What is the best move for Black to continue his attack?

31...♘gf4! (in my game against Vocaturo, Bergamo 2014, Black continued 31...♘xg3 32.♔xg3 ♘f4 33.♘c3 ♖f8 34.♗e3 g4 35.fxg4 h5 36.♖g1 hxg4 37.♗xg4 ♘d3 38.♕e2 ♘xf2 39.♗xd7 ♕xd7 40.♗xf2 ♖f6 41.♗e3 ♕f7 42.♔h2 ♔f8 43.♖g2 1-0; 31...♖f8 is the most natural continuation, but after 32.♕a3 ♗c8 33.♖c6 ♕e7 34.♘e3 it's not easy to find a good plan for Black) 32.gxf4 ♘g3!, and Black has enough counterplay no matter what White does.



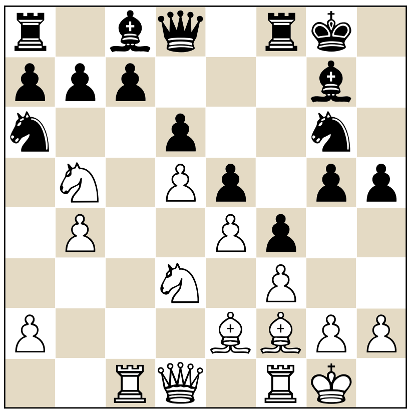
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

For example: 33.♗d3 ♕h5+ 34.♔g2 exf4 35.♗c3 g4 36.fxg4 ♗xg4 37.♘xg4 ♕xg4 38.♘f2 f3+ 39.♔h2 ♕f4 40.♘h3 ♘f1+ 41.♔h1 ♘g3+, and both sides will have to settle for perpetual check.

14.c5 ♘xc5 14...a6 15.♘a4 does not look good for Black, so he has to take the pawn. **15.b4 ♘a6 16.♘d3**

16.♘b5 is another possibility here.

16...h5 17.♘b5

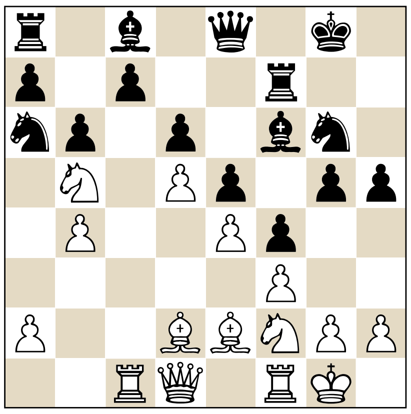


17...b6!? This came as some surprise. Ding protects the a7-pawn at the cost of weakening the queenside light squares.

I had expected 17...♗d7 when, after 18.a4, we reach a theoretical position with many games played. For those willing to learn more about the position I recommend analysing Piket's game against Kasparov, or Radjabov's recent games.

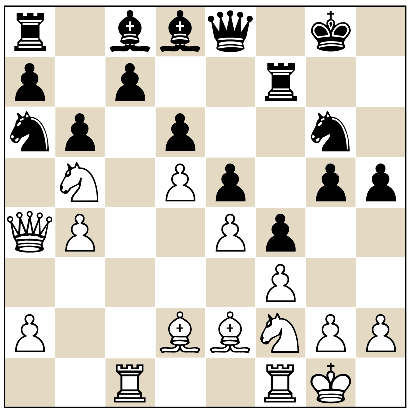
18.♗e1 A typical configuration of the pieces. ♘f2 and h2-h3 will follow, and with his knight stuck on a6, it will be hard for Black to do anything on the kingside.

18...♖f7 19.♘f2 ♗f6 20.♗d2 ♕e8 Intending ...♗d8. I must admit I had overlooked this plan in my preparation, and now I had to start thinking for myself.



21.♕a4 I was debating whether to go for this or 21.a4. Finally I went for the more enterprising option.

21...♗d8



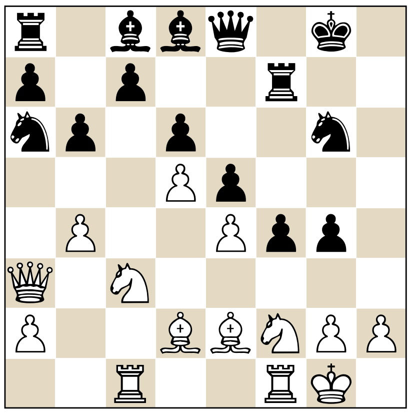
22.♕a3!?

Threatening to take on d6, but this is not the best continuation.

Stronger was 22.♖c3, intending to double rooks on the c-file. After 22...♘b8 23.♕c2 ♗a6 24.a4 ♗xb5 25.axb5 I didn't realize how big White's advantage was. The a7-pawn is going to fall, and without the light-squared bishop Black has no kingside attack.

22...g4 23.fxg4 hxg4 24.♘c3

My first idea was 24.♘xg4 ♗xg4 25.♗xg4 ♕xb5 26.♗e6, but then I realized Black is fine here: 26...♔g7 27.♗xf7 ♔xf7 28.g3 ♗f6, and White does not have enough pieces to continue an attack.



24...♘xb4

A truly shocking move! This hadn't even crossed my mind.

The most natural is 24...♘b8 25.♗xg4 ♗xg4 26.♘xg4 ♖h7 27.♘d1 ♘d7 28.♕a6 ♘f6 29.♘df2 ♘xg4 30.♘xg4, when Black has a very solid position but White is fine too and should have a slight advantage.

At first I was worried about 24...f3 25.♗xa6 fxg2 26.♔xg2, but then I

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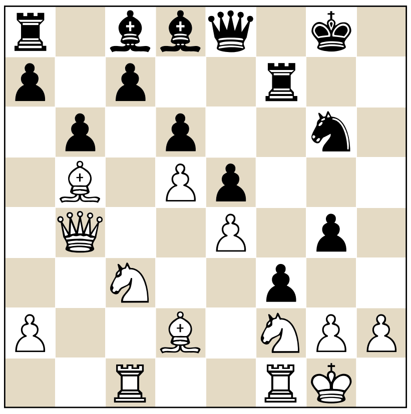
realized that the attack is not really enough for the piece. White has sufficient defence everywhere: 26...♘h4+ 27.♔h1 ♗d7 (27...g3 28.hxg3 ♘f3 29.♗xc8 ♖xc8 30.♕a6 ♕d7 31.♕e2, winning) 28.♗e2 g3 29.hxg3 ♖h7 30.♔g1 ♕g6 31.♘b1, and White wins.

25.♕xb4 I have no choice but to take the piece, of course.

25.♗xg4 a5! favours Black, while 25.♘xg4 ♗xg4 26.♗xg4 ♘d3 leaves Black a pawn up, too.

25...f3 26.♗b5

Gaining time to close the kingside with g2-g3.

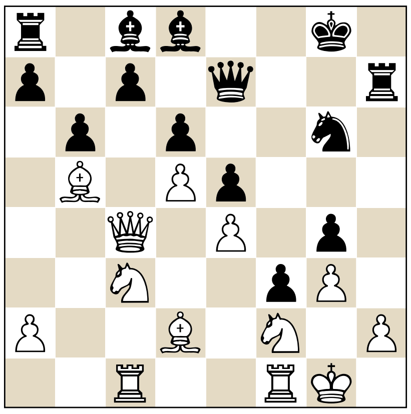


26...♕e7

I don't wish to analyse this position too deeply, as I might miss something, but it seems that White is better. My brief analysis showed lines like 26...♕f8 27.g3 ♖h7 28.♘d3 ♘f4 29.♘xf4 ♗g5, and now, say, 30.♘ce2 fxe2 31.♗xe2 exf4 32.♗xf4, when White is a long way from getting checkmated.

27.g3! ♖h7 28.♕c4

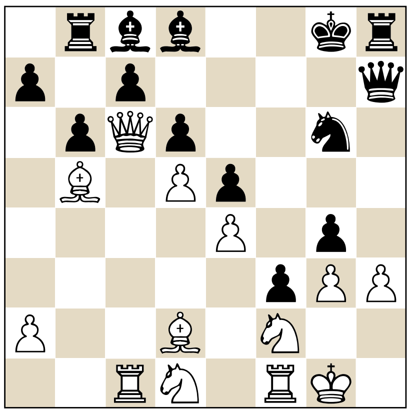
With the simple idea of trading queens with ♕c6-e8+.



28...♖h8!

Black's best chance. Ding prepares for the coming invasion of the white queen.

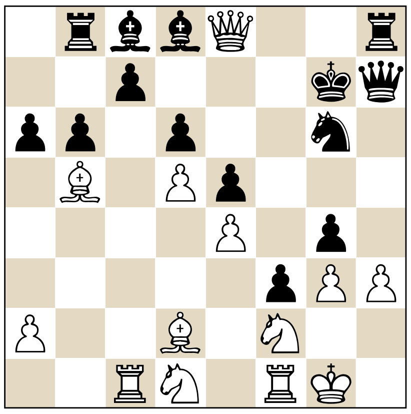
29.♕c6 ♕h7 30.h3 ♖b8 31.♘cd1



31...a6? The decisive mistake.

Ding and I had both missed 31...♘f4!, which would leave me in a sea of troubles. White can defend, but only with a series of precision moves: 32.gxf4 (White can force a draw: 32.♗xf4 exf4 33.♕e8+ ♔g7 34.♖xc7+ ♗xc7 35.♕e7+ ♔g8 36.♕e8+, but a draw would have been quite disappointing for me) 32...♕h4 33.♔h1. White is close to winning, but over the board it's a completely different matter. I don't think I would have been able to avoid mistakes if this had happened, and in the King's Indian each mistake can be costly. Who knows what would have happened if Ding had played 31...♘f4!?.

32.♕e8+ ♔g7



33.♕xd8 Ding had missed this idea.

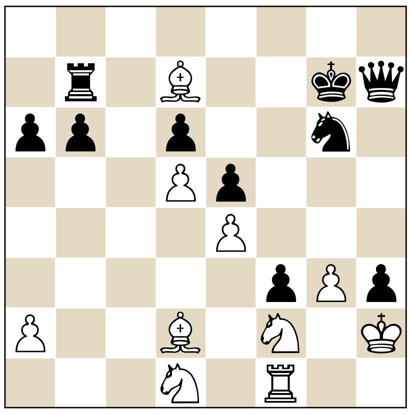
33...♖xd8 34.♖xc7+ ♗d7

34...♔g8 35.♖xh7 ♔xh7 36.♗d3 gxh3 37.♘e3 and wins.

35.♖xd7+ ♖xd7 36.♗xd7 gxh3 37.♔h2

Using my opponent's advanced pawn as a shield! I also want to activate my king.

37...♖b7



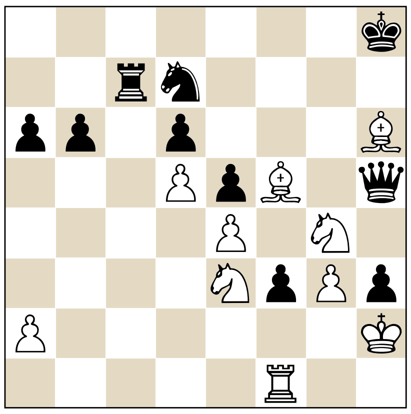
38.♗e6?! A bad idea, changing my plan. My first intention was 38.♗f5, which should have won far more easily.

38...♘f8 39.♗f5 ♕h5 40.♘g4

It was not easy to select a move before the time-control. White has plenty of attractive choices.

The simplest was 40.♘e3 ♕e8 41.♘xh3 ♕a4 42.♖xf3 ♕xa2 43.♖f2 when, with four pieces roaming close to the black king, it shouldn't last long.

40...♘d7 41.♗h6+ ♔h8 42.♘de3 ♖c7



43.♗xd7?

A bad inaccuracy, but fortunately it didn't throw away the win.

White wins at once after 43.♗e6! ♘f6 (43...♘c5 44.♖xf3 ♘xe6 45.dxe6) 44.♘xf6 ♕xh6 45.♖xf3 a5 46.♘e8 ♖c3 47.♘xd6.

43...♖xd7 44.♖xf3 ♖f7 45.♖f5 ♖xf5 46.exf5

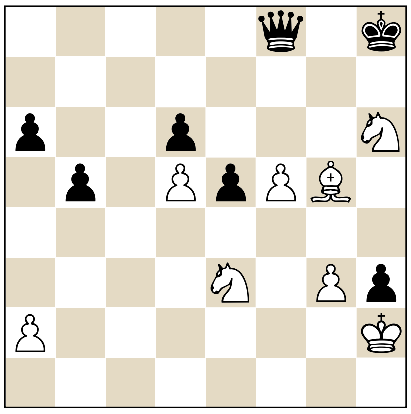
Passed pawns must be pushed!

46...♕f7

Against 46...♕e8 the simplest is 47.♗g5 ♔g7 48.♗e7! ♕d7 49.f6+

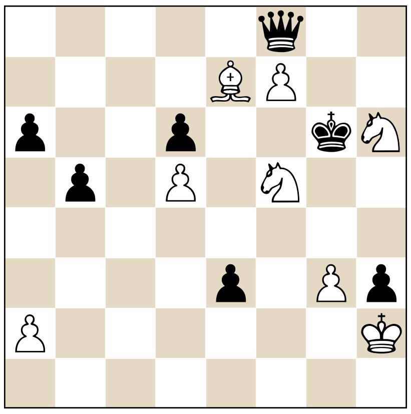
♔g6 50.♘h6 ♔xh6 51.f7, and White finishes up nicely.

47.♗g5 b5 48.♘h6 ♕f8



49.f6 After doing some concrete calculation I finally found a forced win and went for it.

49...♔h7 50.♘ef5 ♔g6 51.♗h4 e4 52.f7 e3 53.♗e7



53...e2 53...♕xf7 54.♘xf7 e2 55.♘e5+ (55.♘h4+ ♔xf7 56.♘f3 also wins) 55...dxe5 56.♘h4+ ♔f7 57.♗b4 leaves Black two pieces down.

54.♘h4+ ♔h7 55.♗xf8 e1♕ 56.♗xd6 ♕f2+ 57.♔xh3 ♕f1+ 58.♔g4 ♕c4+ 59.♗f4 ♕e2+ 60.♘f3

And he resigned. I will say here that Ding Liren is an excellent fighter, and it is always a pleasure to do battle with him.

■ ■ ■

In the other game in the first round, between Anand and Giri, Vishy came up with a very interesting idea against the Berlin Defence and got a clearly better position. But then he started to drift a little and the game ended in a draw. As Anish said after the game: 'I think the problem for my opponent was that his position was too good and he couldn't afford to make any move.'

In the second round I played Anish (I had black), while Vishy had his second white game of the tournament against Ding Liren. Both games started with the Ruy Lopez. I went for the Berlin Defence and managed to hold a slightly worse endgame.

Ding, on the other hand, went for the main line Ruy Lopez and his opponent chose a slow setup with 6.d3. This was the same line Vishy had used to defeat me in the Gashimov Memorial a few months earlier (remember the 10.♘g5 knight sacrifice?), a game which he annotated in New In Chess 2015/4. This time the Chinese player chose a different solid line, and despite Vishy's novelty on the 11th move, he did not gain any advantage and soon had to settle for a draw.

The third round proved to be one of the most exciting rounds of the Bilbao Masters. While my game against Vishy ended in a quick draw after me not getting anything with white in the Semi-Slav, Ding and Anish battled out a marathon 172-move game – almost six hours of exciting chess. Anish had good reason to be disappointed, as he missed a clear win shortly after the first time-control and also had chances later on.

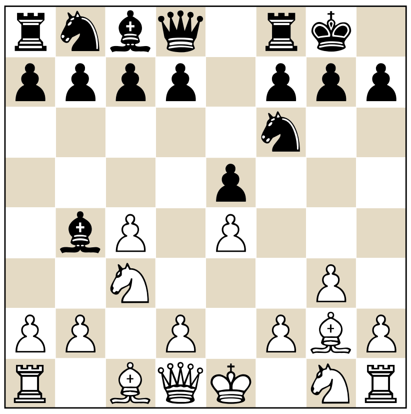
The following day was a rest day, and the players visited a local grade school for kids. They had prepared a big chess board for us, and little kids were dressed as chess pieces. I spent the rest of the day preparing against Ding, making sure that no surprises would arise from the opening. As it turned out, he went for the Anti-Grünfeld with 3.♘f3 and 4.e3, but got a worse position out of the opening, and I didn't have any problems making a draw. But Anish tied for the lead with me after defeating Anand with the English Opening.

EO 11.5 – A22
Anish Giri
Viswanathan Anand
Bilbao 2015 (4)

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3
Against 2.g3, Vishy plays 2...c6, so I suppose White was trying to avoid exactly that.

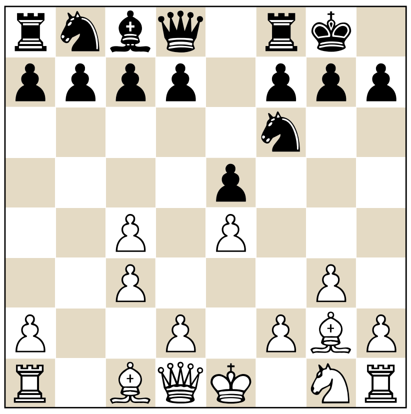
2...♘f6 3.g3 ♗b4
The typical reaction to 3.g3.

4.♗g2 0-0 5.e4



5...♗xc3 This is considered the standard reaction. White is not allowed to connect his forces with ♘ge2 and has to double his pawns.

6.bxc3



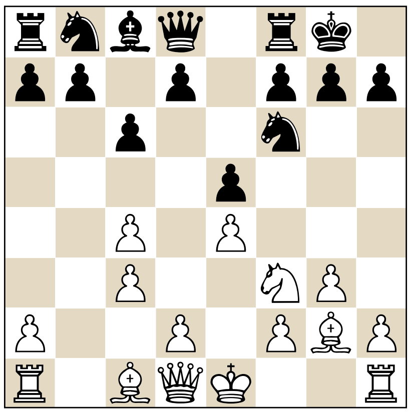
6...c6 Less than a year earlier, in the Qatar Open, Shakhriyar Mamedyarov played this line (5.e4) against Anish: 6...♖e8 7.d3 c6 8.♘e2 (I'm sure White was planning an improvement somewhere. Perhaps 8.g4!? d5 9.g5 ♘fd7 10.cxd5 ♘c5 11.♗e3 ♘ba6, with a very unclear game, or simply 8.♘f3) 8...d5 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♖b1 ♘c6 12.0-0 ♗g4 13.f3 ♗f5! 14.♖xb7 ♘b6 15.f4 e4 16.♕b3?. A blunder, but it was hard to defend already. 16...♗e6 17.♕b5 exd3 18.♖xb6 dxe2 19.♖e1 ♗c4! 20.♕xc6

DAVID LLADA

Anish Giri defeated Vishy Anand for the first time. 'I don't know how I did it. Generally it's impossibe.'

♕d1! 21.♔f2 ♖ad8 0-1, Mamedyarov-Giri, Doha 2014.

7.♘f3!



A new idea. It's a very nice move, and it's strong too. Now Vishy has to solve new problems over the board.

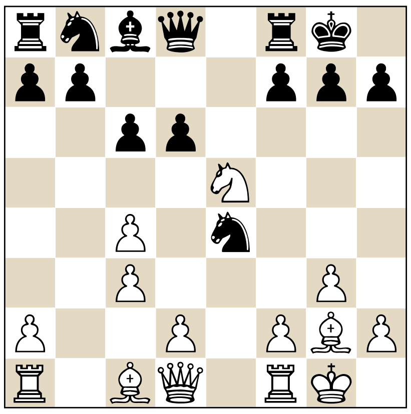
7...♘xe4

7...d6 8.d3 is better for White. He can choose to open up the centre after finishing his development, and eventually make use of his bishop pair.

8.0-0 d6

8...♖e8 9.♖e1 and no matter what Black does, White will regain the pawn and retain his bishop pair.

9.♘xe5

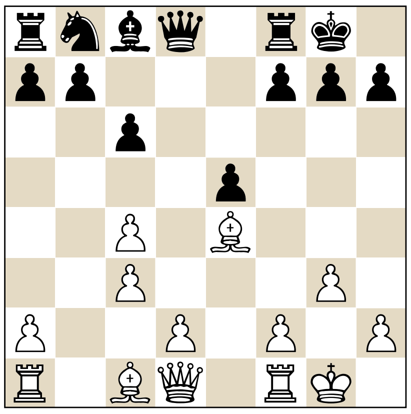


9...dxe5! A good choice. Black might have some tempting options here, but White is better in all of them and you can be sure that Anish has analysed them, too.

9...♘xf2 fails, due to 10.♖xf2 dxe5 11.♗a3 ♖e8 12.♖xf7! ♘d7 (12...♔xf7 13.♕h5+ ♔g8 14.♗e4 g6 15.♗xg6 hxg6 16.♕xg6+ ♔h8 17.♖f1 ♗e6 18.♖f6 and there is no more hope left for Black here) 13.♕h5 ♘f6 14.♖xf6 gxf6 15.♗e4 f5 16.♖f1, and White is clearly better.

9...♘xg3 10.fxg3 dxe5 11.♗a3 ♖e8 12.♖xf7 is the same as 9...♘xf2. And also 9...♘g5 10.♘g4 f5 11.f4, or 9...♘xc3 10.♘xf7, or 9...♘xd2 10.♘xf7 ♖xf7 11.♕xd2 favour White.

10.♗xe4



10...♗e6?

A blunder; very uncommon for Vishy's usual precise and solid play.

I assume that his first intention was 10...♘d7 11.d4 ♘f6, which is quite okay. Perhaps Vishy didn't like that he would have to defend a slightly worse position: 12.♗g2 exd4 13.cxd4 ♗g4 14.♕d2 ♖e8 15.d5. White still has some initiative, and it can be unpleasant to defend this over the board.

11.♗a3

Suddenly Black is going to lose a pawn by force. I was watching this game and remember that White had barely used 10 minutes on his clock. All preparation, I thought, but the fight would have been better if Vishy hadn't gone 10...♗e6?.

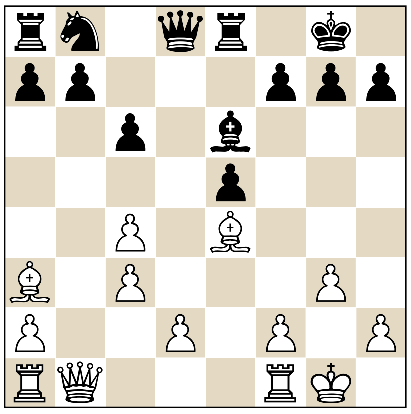
11...♖e8

11...f5 12.♗xf8 fxe4 13.♗a3 does not yield enough for the exchange.

11...♗xc4 12.♗xf8 ♗xf1 13.♗xg7! is also winning.

12.♕b1

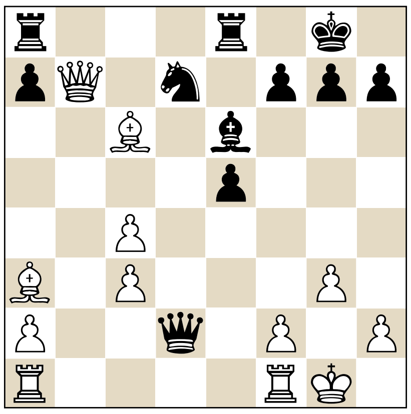
Maybe the move that Black had missed.



12...♕xd2 Desperation. But it doesn't work against Anish.

12...♘d7 was the lesser evil. White can now take on b7 or go 13.♗xh7+ ♔h8 14.♗f5, when he is a pawn up, and the complications favour him after 14...♗xc4 15.♕xb7 ♗xf1 16.♖xf1 ♘f6 17.♕xf7 ♕xd2 18.♗e7 ♘d5 19.♗c5.

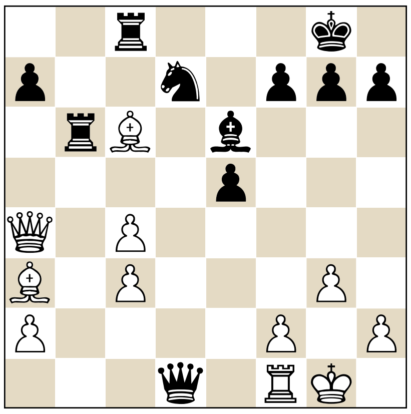
13.♕xb7 ♘d7 14.♗xc6



14...♖eb8 It's not easy to pick a good move in a bad position.

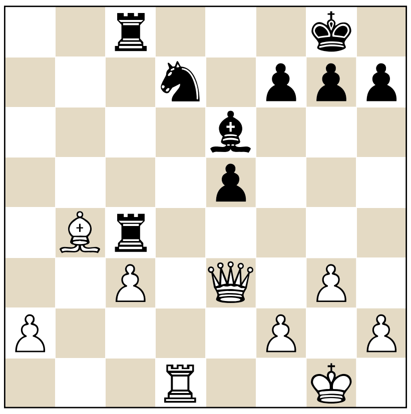
Even after Black's best option 14...♕xc3 White should be close to winning: 15.♗d6 ♖ad8 16.♖ac1 ♕d3 17.♖fd1 ♕f5 18.c5, and Black can hardly move.

15.♕a6 ♖b6 16.♕a4 ♖c8 17.♖ad1 ♕xd1



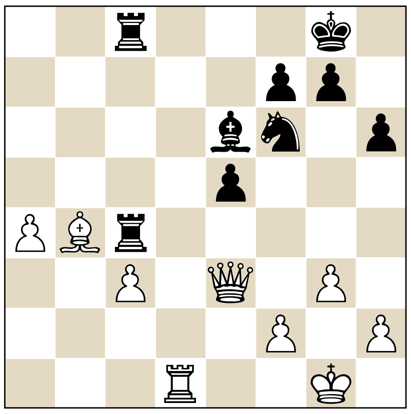
Black attempts to set up a fortress, which shouldn't work. Vishy is hoping for some kind of a miracle.

18.♖xd1 ♖bxc6 19.♕xa7 ♖6c7 20.♕e3 ♖xc4 21.♗b4



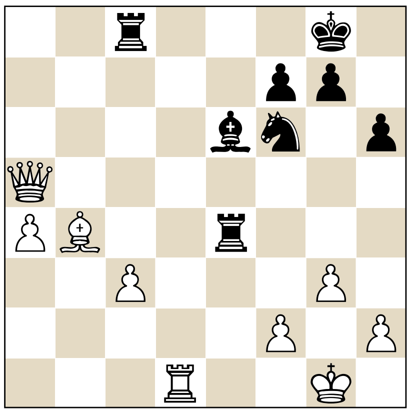
Consolidating the queenside. Now the a-pawn is ready to start running. From here on in, Anish starts carefully nursing his advantage to convert it into a win.

21...h6 22.a4 ♘f6



23.♕xe5 Even simpler was to push the passed pawn: 23.a5 e4 24.a6 ♘d5 25.♕d2, winning.

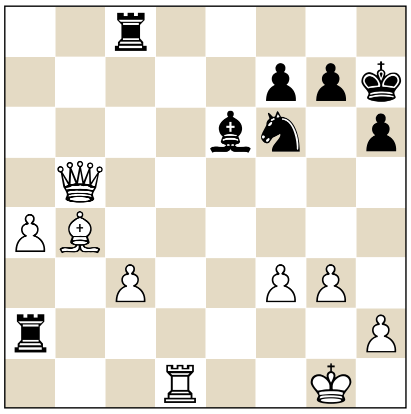
23...♖e4 24.♕a5



24...♔h7

24...♗b3 25.♖d8+ forces exchanges, and makes the conversion easier: 25...♖xd8 26.♕xd8+ ♖e8 27.♕c7 ♗xa4 28.c4, and White wins.

25.f3 ♖e2 26.♕b5 ♖a2



27.g4

Slowly gaining space on the kingside and preventing ...♗h3 ideas.

27.a5 ♗h3 might look a little scary.

27...♖e8 Or 27...h5 28.g5 ♘e8 29.a5 ♗h3 30.♕b7, and wins.

28.♗c5

There is no need to rush. White carefully centralizes his bishop to d4. Any move should be good here, as Black is simply too much behind in material.

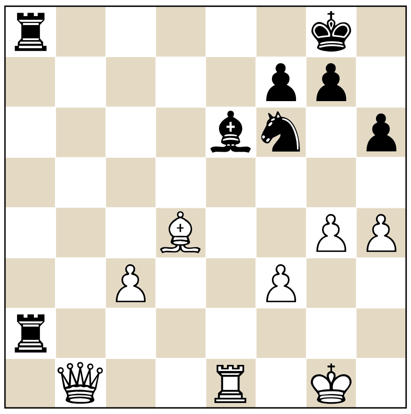
28...♔g8 29.♖e1

29.♗f2 ♖a8 30.♖d4 is also good enough.

29...♖a8 30.♗d4 ♖2xa4 31.h4

31.♔f2 might have been easier, to remove any back rank problems.

31...♖a2 32.♕b1



32...♗d5?

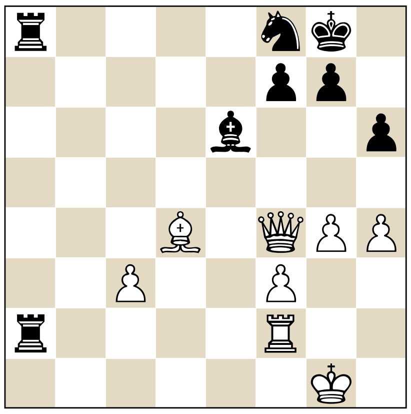
A further mistake, but Black was very low on time.

32...♘d7 is the most tenacious defence, but in the long run White should always find a way to break through after 33.♕e4 ♘f8 34.h5.

33.♕f5 ♗e6 34.♕f4

34.♖xe6 fxe6 35.♕xe6+ also wins. White has too many pawns.

34...♘d7 35.♖f1 ♘f8 36.♖f2



Defending the second rank. Keep in mind that exchanges help the player who is up in material ☺.

36...♖2a5 37.♕g3 ♗c4

Here Black lost on time, but I don't think he could have set up a fortress after 38.♖b2 anyway.

xakean
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jaque

MANU DE ALBA

A happy Wesley So at the prize-giving with the inevitable Txapela, the traditional Basque beret.

This was a tough loss for Vishy, who called it probably his worst game ever. I don't think he was in very good form for this year's Bilbao. He was the defending champion and had scored +2 last year. One should never underestimate Vishy, though. When in good form, he can win tournaments easily. This year alone he had a performance rating of 2892 in the Gashimov Memorial, while in Norway Chess he scored 2900.

The fifth round saw two solid draws. Vishy was White against me and surprised me by playing 1.c4. I replied 1...c5, and we quickly got into one of the main lines of the English. At one point he could have put more pressure on me by offering to trade queens, but other than that the game was more or less a well-played draw.

Giri and Ding Liren played a Zaitsev in which the Chinese player showed that he knows his Ruy Lopez very well. White played a novelty on move 18, exchanged queens, but then had to settle for a draw.

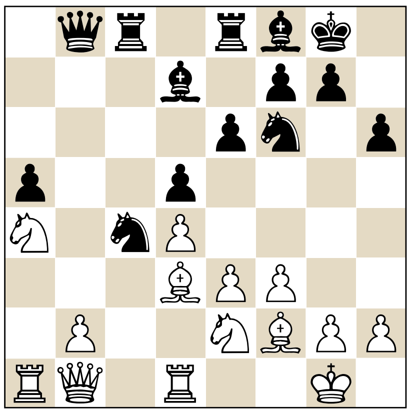
Going into the last round, only Anish and I had chances for first place. We had seven points apiece (using the Bilbao system of three points for a win and one for a draw), while Vishy and Ding Liren had four points each. I decided I would just play a normal game and not look for too many adventures.

As it turned out, I didn't get any chance to complicate the game too much. Anish showed his excellent opening preparation once again, this time in a fashionable line of the Semi-Slav. He definitely knows his lines and comes in well-prepared.

Finally, we had to decide the tournament with tiebreaks. The tiebreaks consisted of two four-minute blitz games plus a three-second increment (4+3), and if the match still wound up tied, we would play an Armageddon game.

As it turned out, the organizers decided to hold the tiebreaks on the 6th floor of the Antzerkia theatre. Vishy and Ding were still playing on the first floor, along with some players from the open section.

I decided to avoid any theoretical discussion or main lines for which Anish would surely be well prepared. So in the first game I played the Exchange Slav, but got a little carried away at some point, misplaced my knight on the e2-square and quickly got into a worse position.

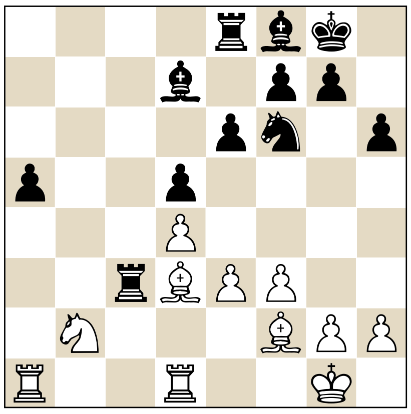


So-Giri
Bilbao 2015 (tiebreak blitz-1)
position after 21...♕b8

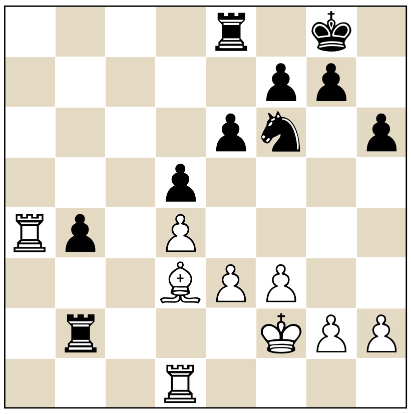
Anish has outplayed me with Black and now stands slightly better. No need to panic! But I did. I played **22.♘ec3?** which loses a pawn.

22.b3 ♘a3 23.♕a2 ♗xa4 24.bxa4 ♕b4 looks kind of depressing, but after 25.♗e1 ♕xa4 26.♗c3! ♕d7 27.♗xa5 White regains the pawn and holds the draw with relative ease.

22...♘xb2 23.♕xb2 ♕xb2 24.♘xb2 ♖xc3



25.♗e1 My first intention 25.♖xa5 loses a piece to 25...♖b8. **25...♖b3 26.♘a4 ♗xa4** I thought that he would go for 26...♖a8 27.♔f2 ♗b4. I guess after both moves Black is well on his way to consolidating. **27.♖xa4 ♗b4 28.♗xb4 axb4 29.♔f2 ♖b2+!** Seizing the second rank.



30.♔f1 ♖c8 Here I was down a minute on the clock, and my position was close to lost. But losing with White in a mini-match would mean I'd need an unlikely comeback in the second game

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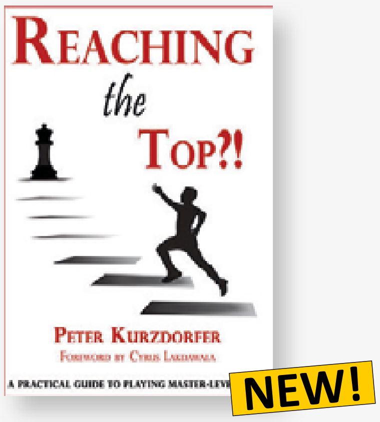

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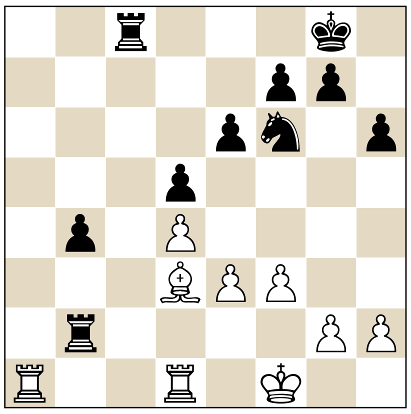
with black, so I tried to defend as best as I could.

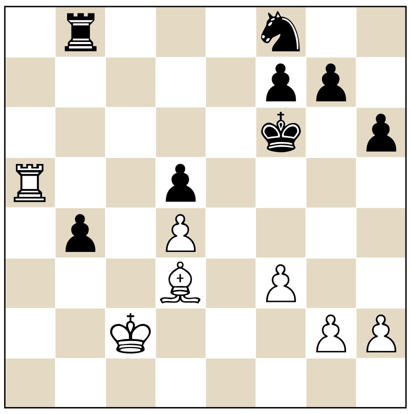
31.♖aa1



31...♔f8 31...b3 32.♖ab1 ♖cc2! 33.♖xb2 ♖xb2 is kind of hard to see in blitz.

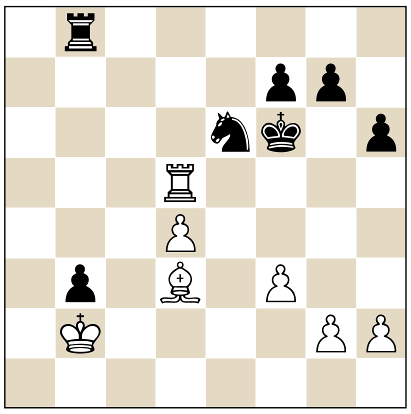
32.♖ab1 ♖xb1 33.♖xb1 ♖b8 34.♔e2 ♔e7 34...♘e8 was Black's best way to increase his advantage.

35.♔d2 ♘d7 36.♔c2 e5 37.♖a1 exd4 38.exd4 ♘f8 39.♖a7+ ♔f6 40.♖a5



I could hardly believe it. Suddenly I was making a draw!

40...♘e6 41.♖xd5 b3+ 42.♔b2



42...♘f4? An even bigger surprise, but blitz is blitz.

43.♖f5+

I was confident that I was going to win the match after this turnaround. But more surprises were awaiting me in the second tiebreak game!

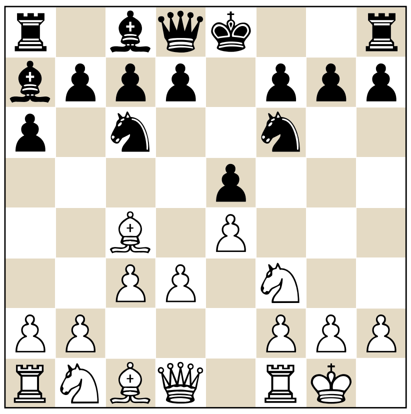
IG 2.13 – C54
Anish Giri
Wesley So
Bilbao 2015 (2)

We were given a 10-minute break before the second tiebreak game. I spent my time chatting with Lotis (his new mother – ed.) backstage to try and relax. Now I 'only' had to draw with Black! But I couldn't have guessed the difficulties awaiting me.

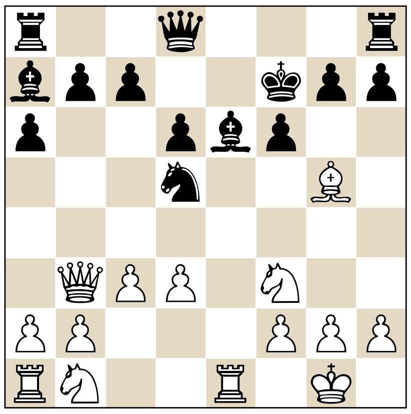
1.e4 A surprise. Is he really going to try to bring down the Berlin Wall in the blitz games?

1...e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 No! Anish is aiming for the Giuoco Piano instead, which was completely unexpected.

3...♗c5 4.d3 ♘f6 5.0-0 a6 6.c3 ♗a7

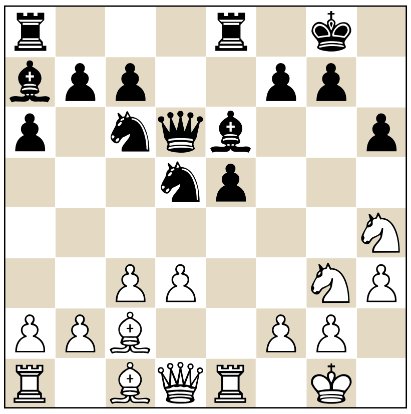


7.♗b3 I have some experience with this position. Baadur Jobava played 7.♗d5 against me earlier this year in Wijk aan Zee: 7...♘xd5 8.exd5 ♘e7 9.♘xe5 d6 10.♘f3 ♘xd5 11.♗g5 f6 12.♖e1+ ♔f7 13.♕b3 ♗e6,

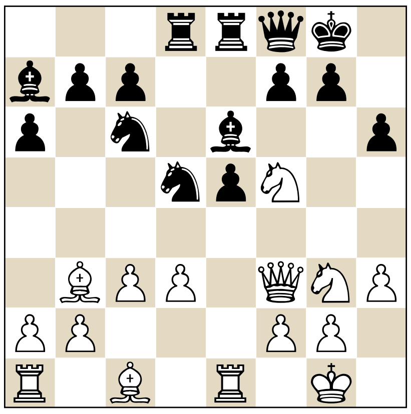


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

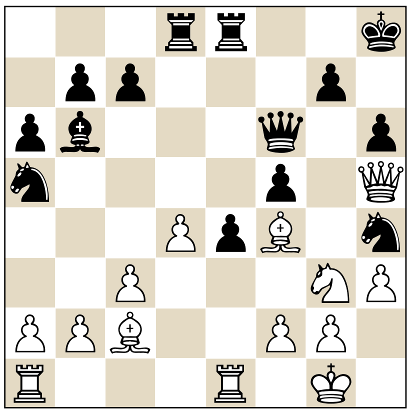
with an unclear position (0-1, 39).
7...h6 8.♘bd2 d6 9.♖e1 0-0 10.h3 ♗e6 11.♗c2 ♖e8 12.♘f1 d5 13.exd5 ♘xd5 14.♘g3 ♕d6 15.♘h4!



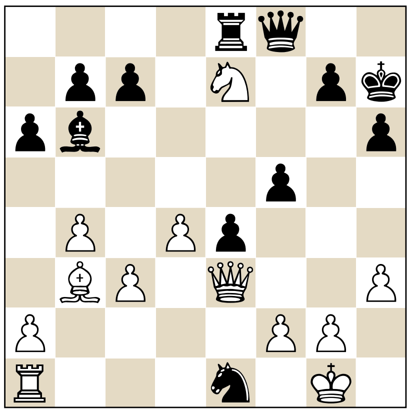
A very strong move, putting my kingside under pressure.
15...♕d7?! I was starting to play without a plan. Better is 15...♕e7 16.♕h5 ♖ad8. **16.♕f3 ♕e7 17.♘hf5 ♕f8 18.♗b3 ♖ad8**



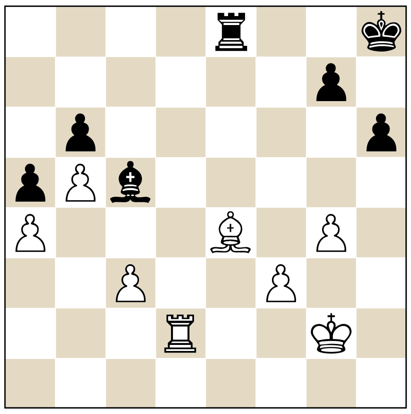
19.♘h5
19.♖e4! should lead to an irresistible attack.
19...♗xf5 20.♕xf5 ♘de7 21.♕f3 ♘g6 22.♖e4 ♘a5 23.♗c2 f5 24.♖e1
24.♖a4 ♘c6 leaves White's rook misplaced.
24...♔h8 25.♘g3 ♘h4 26.♕h5 ♕f6 27.d4 e4 28.♗f4
At first his intention was 28.♗xe4, but perhaps he spotted 28...♘c4, which leaves his bishop pinned.
28...♗b6



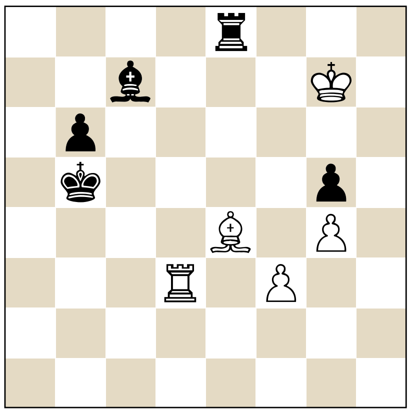
29.♕e2
Better was 29.♗e5 ♕g5 30.♗xg7+ ♔xg7 31.♕xh4, with a clear white advantage.
29...♘c6 30.♘h5 ♕f8 31.♗g3 ♘g6 32.♕e3 ♖e7
32...♘ce7 33.♗b3 c6 would equalize.
33.b4 ♖de8 34.♗b3 ♘ce5 35.♗xe5 ♘xe5 36.♘f4 ♔h7 37.♘d5 ♘d3 38.♘xe7 ♘xe1



39.♘xf5 We both missed the winning 39.♗g8+, which would have sent our mini-match to the Armageddon game. We both had barely half a minute here and were making moves based on instinct.
39...♘xg2 40.♔xg2 ♕xf5 41.♗c2 ♔h8 42.♖e1 ♕f7 43.♗xe4 c6 44.a4 ♗c7 45.♖e2 ♕h5 46.♕f3 ♕g5+ 47.♕g4 ♕xg4+ 48.hxg4 a5 49.b5 ♗d6 50.f3 c5 51.dxc5
51.b6! should win. **51...♗xc5 52.♖d2 b6**



I managed to set up some kind of a fortress and we played on for many more moves. Fast forward to move 97:



position after 96...♗c7

97.♖c3? Allowing a draw.
With 97.♖d5+ ♔c4 98.♖xg5 White would have very good chances to win and I am afraid that we might have to go to Armageddon.
97...♗e5+ 98.♔f7 ♗xc3
And Anish graciously offered a draw. Finally I won! This was clearly the biggest tournament I've won this year. (I also won the Irish Bunratty and the Cez Trophy match against David Navara.)
I would like to thank all the people who made this wonderful event possible; the organizers, sponsors, and of course the players. Thank you as well to Lotis Key for accompanying me during the event. I couldn't have won without her help. ■

Bilbao 2015 cat. XXII

					1	2	3	4		TPR
1	**Wesley So**	IGM	USA	2760	* *	½ ½	½ ½	1 ½	8	2851
2	**Anish Giri**	IGM	NED	2798	½ ½	* *	½ 1	½ ½	8	2838
3	**Vishy Anand**	IGM	IND	2803	½ ½	½ 0	* *	½ ½	5	2723
4	**Ding Liren**	IGM	CHN	2782	0 ½	½ ½	½ ½	* *	5	2730

3 points for a win, 1 for a draw. Wesley So wins blitz tiebreak 1½-½

Hans Ree

Honorary Gentleman

Tim Harding's recent biography of Joseph Henry Blackburne made **HANS REE** realize once again how players of the past had to struggle for a decent income and made him wonder if modern top players are not earning too much.

I used to play poker with friends on occasion. It was five-card draw, the simplest form, and the stakes were not excessive. I was the only person who had done some reading on the subject and I think the rest mildly disapproved of this. So, not being a man of principle, I raised and called much more often than the manuals would approve.

Like all poker players we realized that money was essential to the game. Theoretically, you might just count the chips and leave it at that, with congratulations to the winners and nothing else, but that would make poker senseless. Losing money should hurt enough to encourage people to attempt to play at least somewhat rationally. On the other hand, the losers never felt humiliated after a setback in what they considered a game of chance.

In chess between friends, humiliation can play the same role as money in friendly poker.

The late Adriaan de Groot and Johan Barendregt used to play long blitz sessions. They were both professors of psychology at the University of Amsterdam and both strong players. Barendregt was an IM and De Groot, nowadays mainly known for his book *Thought and Choice in Chess*, had been a member of the Dutch team at the 1939 Olympiad in Buenos Aires.

They had developed a delicate ritual. At the end of their session the loser would bow and say solemnly: 'You are my superior at the game of chess.' This was not just a joke. Barendregt once wrote that he was sure that De Groot would gladly give up all his titles and honours as a social scientist in exchange for an IM title. Occasionally, Barendregt would make a subtle remark to rub in the delicious fact that he was an IM and his friend Adriaan was not. Not too often, though, for Adriaan should not get used to it.

The Amateur's Guilt

It is 80 years ago that Max Euwe became World Champion by drawing the 30th game of his match against Alexander Alekhine on December 15, 1935. He had become a Dutch national hero and at one of the honouring ceremonies he was cheered by a big crowd. Later, in a TV interview with the Dutch writer Godfried Bomans, he said that the following thought had gone through his head: 'I am supposed to be very happy now.'

Euwe's biographer Alexander Münninghoff quotes him as follows: 'Ah well, I did not find it unpleasant at all. People were very nice to me, although there were also a few annoying anonymous letter-writers. And I was regularly asked to donate money to charitable institutions or to indigent private individuals. They probably thought that I would also be a very rich person now. But I wasn't at all: I got enormous praise as a World Champion, but I hadn't a sou to pay for the tram. Salo Flohr advised me to go and holiday on the Riviera for a while, but I wouldn't even have made it to the Central Station.'

All the prize-money for the match went to Alekhine. Euwe had taken leave from his job as a mathematics teacher, probably unpaid, and he would have to pay his helpers, Geza Maroczy and others. Of course he eventually gained a lot from his world championship, also financially. But not at the time.

From the point of view of a chess professional there was some justice to it. Euwe might have been without a sou at the end of 1935, but that would be temporary, since he had a solid job. From the start of the match he had said that he had no ambition to beat Alekhine and that every point he scored would be considered a success. So what was he doing challenging Alekhine?

In a way he was invulnerable as an amateur, being financially secure and impervious to criticism in case of defeat, as he was only an amateur. In that age, the amateur was regarded as a morally superior breed in many sports. The English expression ‘gentlemen and players’ says it all.

‘Why don’t you stick to your transformers?’ cried Aaron Nimzowitsch when the electrical engineer Milan Vidmar had beaten him at the tournament of New York 1927. ‘Why do you participate in big tournaments? Do you want to sour the lives of us professionals?’ Vidmar answered that he would not object at all if Nimzowitsch were to build some transformers himself, and in his memoirs *Goldene Schachzeiten*, in which he relates this conversation, he adds a friendly, although rather condescending, appraisal of Nimzowitsch as a man.

Gentlemen and Players

The relation between gentlemen and players at the beginning of the 20th century was described in a beautiful interview with the Dutch master Jacques Davidson (1890-1969) by the journalist Willem Wittkampf that appeared in the *Het Parool* newspaper in 1962.

As a boy, Davidson had moved to London with his parents, and at the age of 17 he started earning some money by playing chess against rich Englishmen at the Café Vienna. An older Dutch player, Rudolf Loman, who had also settled in London, gave him valuable instructions.

The stakes were usually a shilling per game, which in modern terms would be close to five pounds. They usually played a series of five games, and Davidson was instructed by Loman always to lose the last game. This was tough, as he would be winning only three shillings for five games, but it was necessary to give the customer a good feeling. A pleasant conversation in which the customer was told that he really had talent and might become a master if he tried hard enough, would always make him come back. And the gentleman would never try hard, of course. As Robert Hübner once wrote, when an English lord feels the need for exercise, he orders his butler to run a few rounds.

Davidson was sometimes invited to a gentleman’s mansion to play there. This was a great privilege, since there would be no competition from the other chess sharks of Café Vienna. He would be taken there in a chauffeured car, and another servant would open the gentleman’s entrance gate, and when he was returned to his own quarters, the two servants accompanied him again, as the gentleman liked to indulge in the fiction that Davidson also had an entrance gate to his estate.

‘At least Blackburne didn’t have to suffer the disdain for professionals, since it seems that the more affluent players accepted him as an honorary gentleman.’

The gentleman often let his bill add up for a long time. He would always pay in the end, but Loman had warned Davidson: ‘Never ask for your money. He will pay at once, but he will never play you again.’ It would be unbearable for the gentleman to admit the thought that he was playing someone who actually needed the money. Sometimes Davidson came home crying, when the gentleman had failed to pay again.

When Davidson settled in the Netherlands in the 1920s, he may have been the second player there, after Euwe, but in the 1962 interview he still speaks bitterly of the humiliations he had had to accept as a professional.

Shilling Hunter

Recently I received Tim Harding’s biography of Joseph Henry Blackburne (1841-1924), whose name is connected, maybe unjustly, with the Blackburne shilling trap 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘d4, hoping for 4.♘xe5 ♕g5. Though it has not been documented that Blackburne actually ever played this line, it seems likely that he did, as Harding writes that Blackburne must have played thousands of casual ‘shilling’ games. The temptation of an ultra-quick win must have been strong.

I have not yet read this massive 582-page tome, but just browsing through it makes you realize what a hard life it was, even for one of the best players in the world. Blackburne was estimated to have played more than 50,000 games in simuls and blindfold exhibitions. He didn’t complain, though he once said that these simuls were easier for Steinitz and Gunsberg, as they were shorter. I had never thought of that, and it increased my admiration for the tall Max Euwe, who was giving simuls till the end of his life.

At least Blackburne didn’t have to suffer the disdain for professionals, since it seems that the more affluent players accepted him as an honorary gentleman.

Like many people I have a sadist streak, and I sometimes wonder if the present top players don’t have it too easy. Is it still important to them to become World Champion when they make so much money anyway? After a loss, can they still suffer enough for our pleasure? What would a Roman public have thought of a bunch of amiable gladiators who, cheques in hand, all left the stadium unscathed for a convivial after-fight drink?

Shame on me. Whatever our darker leanings, millionaire chess is better than shilling chess. ■

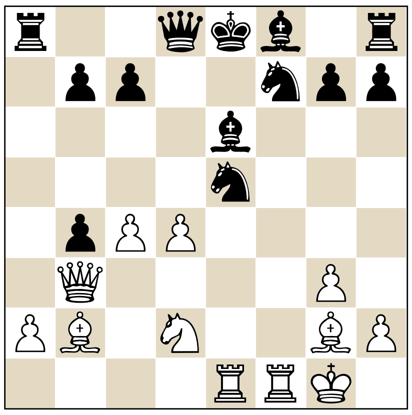
Jan Timman

Travels in time

Upon his arrival in the Isle of Man, **JAN TIMMAN** felt as if he had been teleported to the 1970s. Less than a week after the PokerStars Chess Tournament, his thoughts again wandered back to bygone days when, in Hoogeveen, he played a match against an opponent 47 years his junior; Jorden van Foreest (16), Holland's youngest grandmaster.

Douglas, the capital city of the Isle of Man, recently hosted the third edition of the PokerStars Chess Tournament. With a large contingent of grandmasters taking part, it was even more strongly contested than the previous years. Poker and motor racing are popular in the Isle of Man. Quite modern pursuits, you would think, but in some respects the island is way behind the times. It was my first visit to the island, and when the captain of the propeller plane leaving from Liverpool told us that we were going 50 years back in time, it set me thinking. But it was true: a steam train plies the coastline and in summer horse-drawn trams provide passenger services on the impressive boulevard. They even have a home for retired horses just outside the city. But there is another side to romance and nostalgia. The apartment where I stayed had an electricity meter that you had to feed coins, which made me think of the English hotels in the early 1970s, where you always had to have a two-shilling coin handy for the heating in order not to have your nose frozen off.

The playing conditions in the Villa Marina were good. The first three rounds of chess, played while the poker tournament was still going, were played in a smaller hall in the building – poker held pride of place. But then the majestic main hall became available. 101 players participated in the tournament, which usually means that a score of seven points is enough for first place. Short did exceptionally well last year by scoring 7½. He was in excellent form again this year and also played the most spectacular move of the tournament.



Greenfeld-Short
Isle of Man 2015 (5)
position after 16.♖ae1

Greenfeld has gone for a sharp set-up, making a temporary piece sacrifice.

16...♗c5!?

A developing move that is bound to make the heart of every true lover of studies beat faster. Black has pinned the d-pawn, restricting White's possibilities. But this bishop move still wasn't Black's best option, because it gave White the chance to grab the advantage. The equally surprising 16...♖a3! would have been the correct way to solve Black's positional problems. After 17.♕c2 ♖xa2 18.♕b1 the position is dynamically balanced.

17.♕e3? A weak move that squanders White's control of the position. If White had taken the bishop, the position would have been equal. But the problem move 17.♗d5!, closing the d-file and winning back the piece with advantage, would have been better.

17...♖xa2

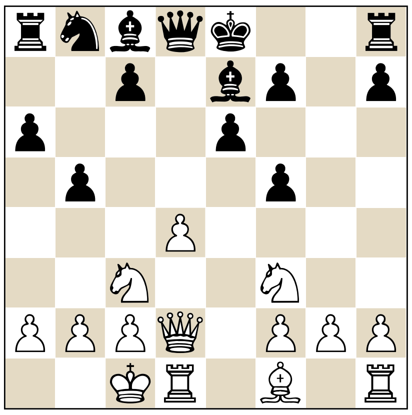
Simple and winning. The white position collapses like a house of cards.

With a last-round win over Harikrishna, Short could have won the tournament again. This did not happen, but Short could still look back on a successful tournament. He gained some rating-points, so that as a 50-year-old he had managed to fight his way back into the top-50.

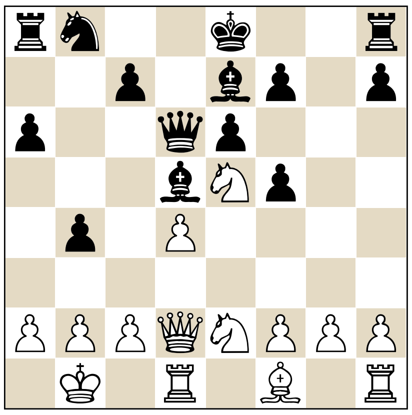
Harikrishna shared first place with Fressinet and Sargissian, and won the tiebreak. As he had played almost continuously on the first board, his victory was well-deserved. His Round-7 win against Naiditsch was an important milestone.

FR 5.2 – C11
Arkadij Naiditsch
Pentala Harikrishna
Isle of Man 2015 (7)

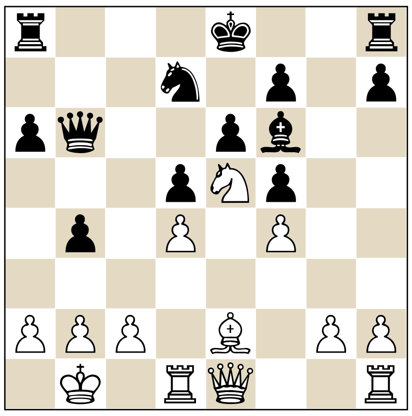
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 dxe4 5.♘xe4 ♗e7 6.♗xf6 gxf6 7.♘f3 Morozevich's move.
7...a6 8.♕d2 f5 9.♘c3 b5 10.0-0-0



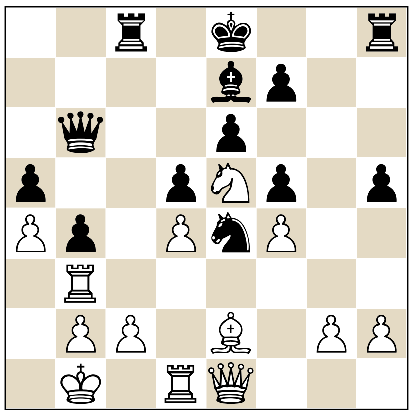
10...b4 An important safety measure. Before fianchettoing his queen's bishop, Black chases away the knight. After 10...♗b7, 11.d5! would have been strong, as in Bodnaruk-Shimanov, St. Petersburg 2011.
11.♘e2 ♗b7 12.♔b1 ♕d6 13.♘e5 ♗d5



14.♕e1
White wants to play his knight to f4, but the immediate 14.♘f4 could have been met by 14...♗g5.
However, 14.h4, intending to deprive the black bishop of square g5, would have offered better chances of an opening advantage. After 14...♘d7 15.♘f4 Black would not have had it easy.
14...♘d7 15.♘f4 c6
Now Black has a solid position.
16.♗d3 ♗f6 17.♘xd5 cxd5 18.f4 ♕b6 19.♗e2
The most natural move was 19.♕e3. After the text White is threatening to transfer his bishop to h5, but Black can easily prevent this.



19...h5!
The standard Sicilian move. Black prevents the bishop sortie.
20.♖d3 ♖c8 21.♕d2 ♗e7 22.♖b3 ♘f6
Ambitious play. Black could have swapped the rooks but prefers a sharp fight.
23.♖d1 a5 24.a4 ♘e4 25.♕e1

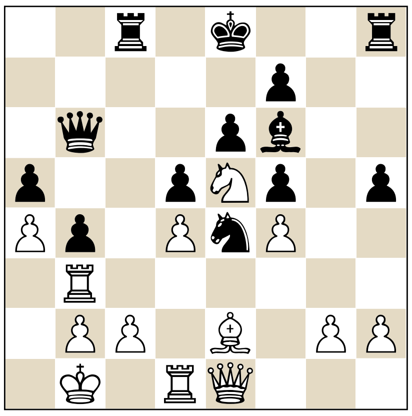


Both players have a strong centralized knight now, and the computer assesses the position as equal. Yet it seems to me that Black is slightly better, not only because of his strong pawn structure, but also because his knight is potentially stronger than White's. Black can, for example, safely swap his bishop on e5, but for White this would be a lot more difficult: if White swaps on e4, Black will automatically get a strong passed pawn. The white position has the advantage that its king is safer, but that doesn't count for much yet. With the black knight on e4, White will find it very hard to launch an attack.
25...♗f6

WELCOME
TO THE

At the third PokerStars Chess Tournament in the Isle of Man, Pentala Harikrishna won the title on tiebreak. India's number two finished on 7 points from 9 games, level with Laurent Fressinet and Gabriel Sargissian. Each of them took home £6,000 in prize money.

But this is too optimistic, since White can now break open the queenside to greater effect. Black should have withdrawn his queen with, for example, 25...♕c7, not needing to fear the consequences of 26.♗b5+ ♔f8. The king can safely look for shelter on the g-file.

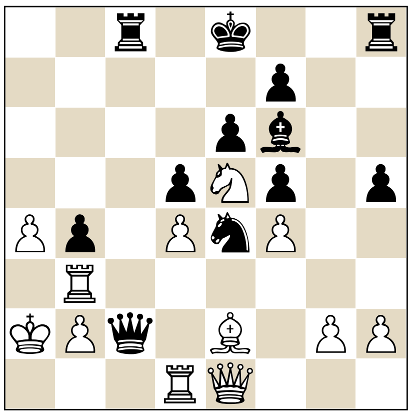


26.c3! Naiditsch has sharply calculated that this breaking move will lead to an advantage for White.

26...♕c7

This is what Harikrishna had apparently pinned his hopes on. In the ensuing tactical skirmish, however, he will lose control of the position.

27.cxb4 ♕c2+ 28.♔a2 axb4



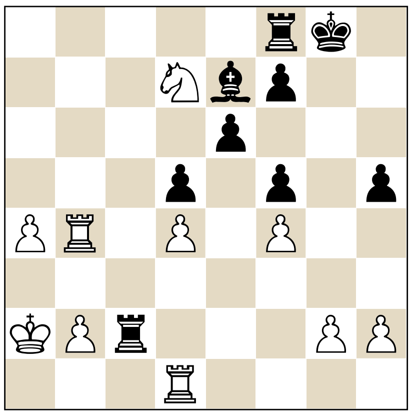
29.♗d3 This just about works.

29...♘c3+ 30.♕xc3! The point of the previous move. White liquidates to a favourable endgame.

30...♖xc3 31.♗xc2 ♖xc2 32.♖xb4 0-0

Quite a late point in the game to castle. Black had to find a safe place for his king. After 32...♗xe5 33.dxe5 ♔d7 34.♔b3 the double-rook ending would have looked quite bad for Black.

33.♘d7 ♗e7



34.♖b7 A natural move. White plays the threatened rook to the seventh rank. But he had a better option. With 34.♘xf8 ♗xb4 35.♔b3! he could have secured a large advantage. By swapping the rooks White has made his passed pawns on the queenside very dangerous. After 35...♖c4 36.♘d7 ♗d6 37.♖a1! the white a-pawn will be virtually unstoppable, and after 36...♗a5 37.♘e5 White will have a healthy extra pawn.

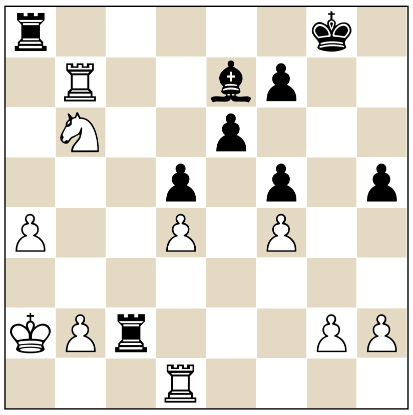
Douglas Isle of Man 2015

1	Pentala Harikrishna	IND	2737	7
2	Laurent Fressinet	FRA	2702	7
3	Gabriel Sargissian	ARM	2679	7
4	David Howell	ENG	2705	6½
5	Nigel Short	ENG	2678	6½
6	Michael Adams	ENG	2742	6
7	Arkadij Naiditsch	AZE	2682	6
8	Julio Granda Zuniga	PER	2667	6
9	Sergei Movsesian	ARM	2658	6
10	Erwin l'Ami	NED	2619	6
11	Alexander Donchenko	GER	2577	6
12	Sabino Brunello	ITA	2553	6
13	Jorden van Foreest	NED	2548	6
14	Francesco Rambaldi	ITA	2547	6
15	Tiger Hillarp Persson	SWE	2546	6
16	Mishra Swayams	IND	2444	6
17	Nils Grandelius	SWE	2647	5½
18	Yuriy Kuzubov	UKR	2641	5½
19	Gawain Jones	ENG	2623	5½
20	Hrant Melkumyan	ARM	2622	5½
21	Sergei Tiviakov	NED	2612	5½
22	Deep Sengupta	IND	2580	5½
23	Avital Boruchovsky	ISR	2536	5½
24	Alon Greenfeld	ISR	2534	5½
25	Keith Arkell	ENG	2505	5½
26	Daniel Gormally	ENG	2500	5½
27	Kidambi Sundararajan	IND	2497	5½
28	Eylon Nakar	ISR	2463	5½
29	Martin Zumsande	GER	2422	5½
30	Jovanka Houska	ENG	2372	5½
31	Daniel Fridman	GER	2649	5
32	Jan Timman	NED	2562	5
33	Max Illingworth	AUS	2517	5
34	Anatoly Vaisser	FRA	2515	5
35	Vishnu Prasanna	IND	2503	5
36	James Tarjan	USA	2479	5
37	Jonas Lampert	GER	2461	5
38	Alexander Cherniaev	RUS	2458	5

105 players, 9 rounds

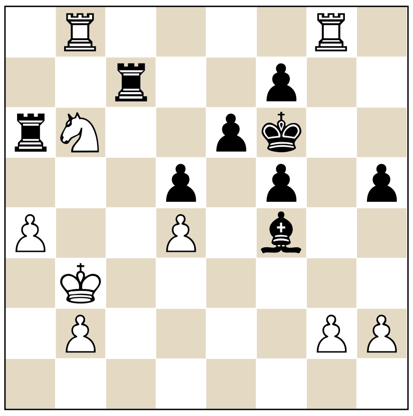
34...♖a8 35.♘b6

This also looks promising; but Black has an important resource.



35...♖a6! From here on in, Harikrishna's play is flawless.

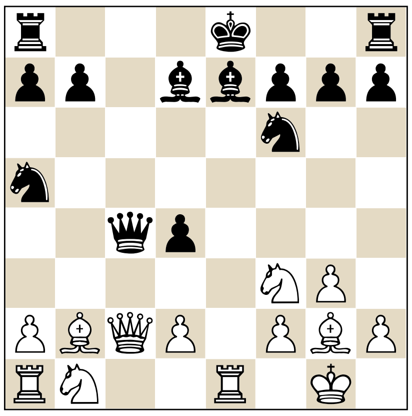
36.♖d3 ♗d6 37.♖g3+ ♔h8 38.♔b3 ♖c7 39.♖b8+ ♔h7 40.♖gg8 The notorious 40th move just before the time-control. Stronger was 40.♖g5, with an equal position, e.g. 40...♖ca7 41.♖xh5+ ♔g7 42.♖hh8 ♗xf4 43.g3! ♗xb8 44.♖xb8, and White's passed pawns constitute sufficient compensation for the exchange. **40...♗xf4 41.♖h8+ ♔g7 42.♖hg8+ ♔f6**



43.♖gd8? A blunder, but after 43.g3 ♗e3 Black would also have been better. **43...♖ca7** Winning. **44.♖e8 ♗xh2** Black leaves the rook in peace and continues to snatch pawns.

45.♔a3 ♗g1 46.♖a8 ♗xd4 47.♘d7+ ♔g5 48.♖xa7 ♖xa7 49.♘b8 ♖a8 50.b4 ♗a7 51.a5 ♖xb8 52.♖xb8 ♗xb8 53.b5 ♗c7 54.b6 ♗d8 55.♔b4 d4 56.♔c4 e5
White resigned.

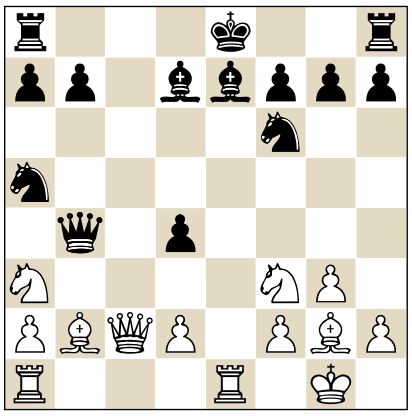
I myself had a good start to the tournament, but then I had to contend with the sleep problems that had also plagued me in Wijk aan Zee earlier this year. I was quite happy with this fragment from a game.



Timman-Lampert
Isle of Man 2015 (7)
position after 14...♕xc4

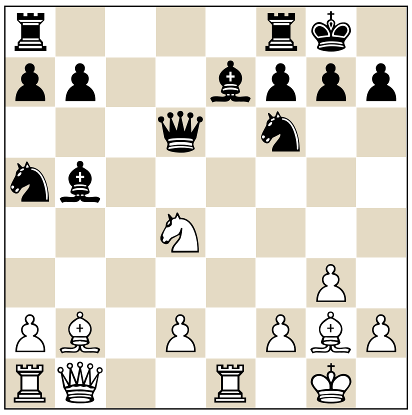
Here I played **15.♘a3** assuming that Black would have to swap the queens, after which White will win back the pawn with advantage.

15...♕b4
A total surprise, but not without its own logic. Black protects the bishop and is ready to castle. Yet I felt that Black's plan could not be sound. After some thinking I found the weak spot.



16.♕b1!
It doesn't often happen that the decisive blow is prepared in one's own territory. Black has no defence, since 16...0-0 fails to 17.♘c2 ♕d6 18.♗a3, and wins. Nor will 16...d3 save him in view of 17.♗c3! ♕xb1 18.♖axb1 ♘c6 19.♖xb7, and the white rooks will wreak their destruction.

16...♕d6 17.♘xd4 0-0 18.♘ab5 ♗xb5



19.♘f5!
Another important point of White's play. Black's position collapses.

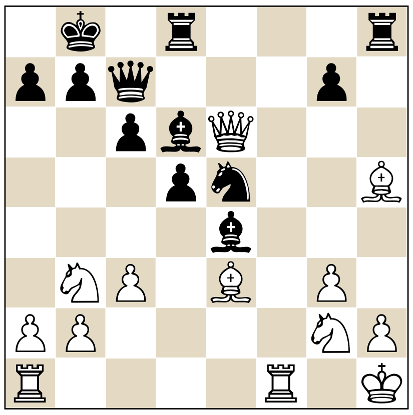
19...♗d3 20.♘xd6 ♗xb1 21.♖xe7 ♗g6 22.♗c3 ♖ad8 23.♘xb7 ♘xb7 24.♖xb7 ♗e4 25.♖xa7 ♗xg2 26.♔xg2 ♘d5 27.a4 h6 28.a5
Black resigned.

■ ■ ■

Less than a week after PokerStars, the annual festival in Hoogeveen kicked off. Its main sponsor, insurance company Univé, having withdrawn its support, tournament director Loek van Wely was left with limited financial means. He stuck to his formula of two matches instead of a double-round four-player event, but lacked the money to invite strong foreign grandmasters. Thus the idea was born to organize matches between Jorden van Foreest and me, and between Guramishvili and Kazarian, the new European U16 Junior Champion. Jorden is 47 years younger than me. We had seen a similar clash of champions from different generations in Holland before. In 1975, a short match between Euwe and me was planned; Euwe was exactly 50 years older than me. Then my father died, and Sosonko took my place. There was a slightly smaller age-difference between Euwe and Sosonko than between Jorden and me.

Unfortunately, I didn't have much time to prepare. Before departing for the Isle of Man I had been working to make the deadline for my new book. What I did do was taking time to follow all Van Foreest's games. There were a lot of them; my youthful opponent hadn't given himself much rest this year. It struck me how quickly he had developed. Not that his play was flawless yet; in some games he missed the strategic line, and sometimes he failed to calculate his variations through correctly. But I hasten to add that he has an excellent sense for the initiative. I decided to go mainly for strategic games and to limit my repertoire: flank openings as White, the Caro-Kann as Black. My opponent, incidentally, had also played in Douglas, but had immediately continued on to Berlin for the Rapid and Blitz World Championship – the overconfidence of youth.

As it happened, my plan to go for strategic games came to nought in our very first match game, which turned into a very sharp fight in which I sacrificed a piece immediately after the opening. In the tactical skirmishes we both allowed chances to slip through our fingers, and I was the last one to miss a hidden combination.

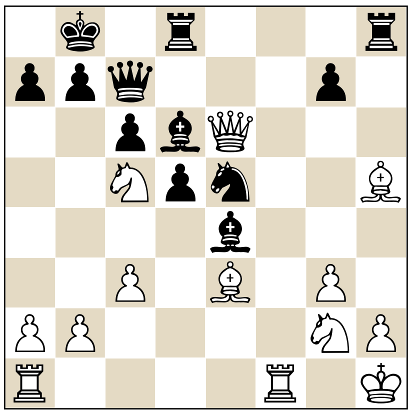


Van Foreest-Timman
Hoogeveen 2015 (1st game)
position after 21...♔b8

It will be hard for White to hang on to his piece; he could try 22.♗f7, but after 22...♖d7 23.♗g8 Black has the subtle 23...b6! to control square c5.

The white king's bishop will eventually fall, and then Black takes control.

22.♘c5 Ambitious but not good. White's best bet was 22.♘d2 in order to swap the mighty e4-bishop as quickly as possible.

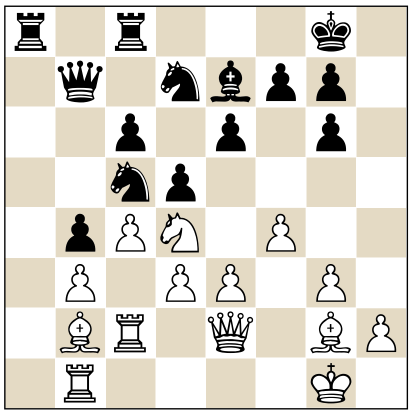


22...♗xg2+
Despite a long think, I failed to spot the combination.

After 22...♗xc5 23.♗xc5 ♖xh5 White had planned 24.♖f8, threatening to take a firm grip on the position. But Black beats him to it with 24...♘f3!, when 25.h4 would fail to 25...♖xh4+!, and wins. White will have to capture with his knight and run into a devastating discovered check.

23.♔xg2 ♖xh5 24.♖ae1 Now the position is equal. **24...♗xc5 25.♗xc5 ♘d3 26.♗e7 ♘xe1+ 27.♖xe1 ♖hh8 28.♗xd8 ♖xd8 29.♖f1 a5 30.b3 d4 31.cxd4 ♖xd4 32.♖f7 ♖d2+ 33.♖f2 ♖d4 34.♖f7 ♖d2+ 35.♖f2 ♖d4 36.♖f7**
Draw.

In Game 4, I went for a quiet flank opening, as planned.

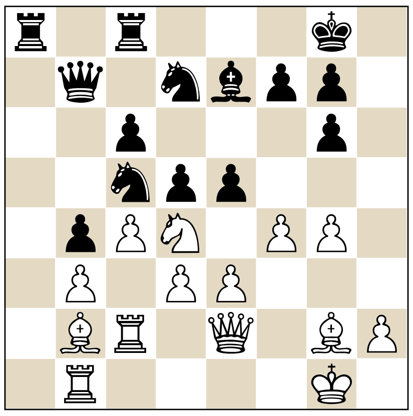


Timman-Van Foreest
Hoogeveen 2015 (4th game)
position after 22...♘d7

The interesting thing about quiet flank openings is that the position often holds all kinds of hidden tensions.

23.g4 Preparing further expansion on the kingside.

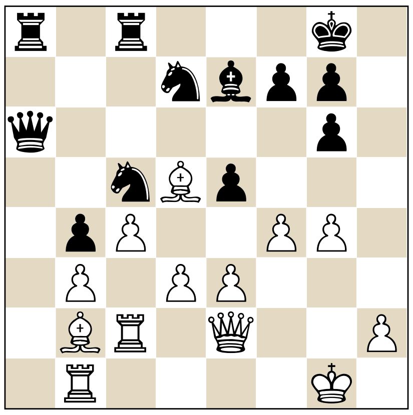
23...e5 This is asking for trouble. The long diagonal will be broken open. Black should have restricted himself to quiet positional moves like 23...♖e8. The computer has a remarkable preference for 23...g5. It's not so obvious to become active on the side where White is superior. I believe White would have a slight plus after 24.fxg5 ♗xg5 25.♘f3.



24.♘xc6!
It goes without saying that I didn't let this chance go a-begging. All central black pawns will be eliminated.

24...♕xc6 The consequences of 24...♖xc6 25.cxd5 would have been even worse for Black.

25.♗xd5 ♕a6



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Let the games begin! Jorden van Foreest, Tournament Director Loek van Wely, special guest Geurt Gijssen and Jan Timman.

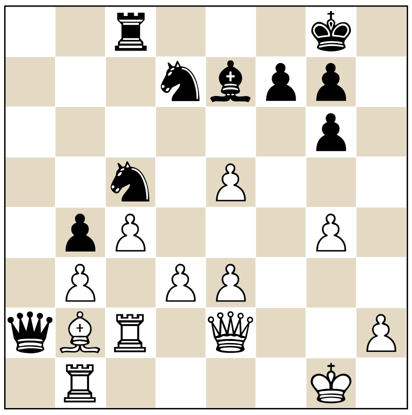
FRANS PEETERS

26.♗xa8 I played this move virtually without thinking. There is a psychological reason for this. Three years ago, in the Open tournament in Hoogeveen, I had let a winning position slip through my fingers because I decided, after a long think, not to capture an exchange. Sometimes you're so happy with a position that you think: Never mind; I can always take that rook later. However, that turned out not to be the case that time. But this time it was! The white bishop reigns supreme from d5, partly because it is also eyeing the weak black f-pawn. After the simple 26.fxe5 White would have a large advantage.

26...♕xa8 27.fxe5 I decided not to go 27.♗xe5 in view of 27...♘xe5 28.fxe5 ♗g5!, and now 29.d4 fails to 29...♕e4!, and Black wins.

27...♕a2

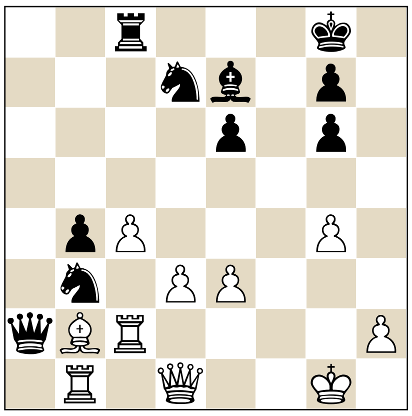
Far too optimistic. Black not only wants to capture the b-pawn, but also to grab the initiative. However, this plan runs into a tactical refutation. After 27...♘xb3 the position would have been dynamically balanced.



28.♕d1! The start of a *petite combinaison*. **28...♘xb3 29.e6!**

Opening the long diagonal.

29...fxe6



30.♗f6!

It's a joy to be allowed to make such a move. The black bishop will be lost.

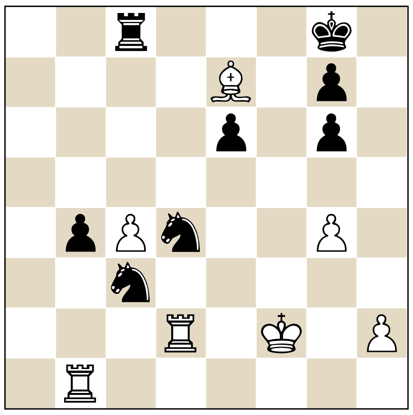
30...♕a7 31.♗xe7 ♕xe3+ 32.♖f2 ♘d4

Black has managed to generate some counterplay. White's strongest move now would have been 33.♗d6, keeping the knight from e5. But I wanted to go for a queen swap as quickly as possible.

33.♔g2 ♘e5 34.♕d2 ♕xd3

More tenacious would have been 34...♘xg4, when after 35.♕xe3 ♘xe3+ 36.♔h1 b3 White will face a difficult technical job.

35.♕xd3 ♘xd3 36.♖d2 ♘f4+ 37.♔g3 ♘fe2+ 38.♔f2 ♘c3



Black appears to have solved his problems with a series of deft knight manoeuvres, but White has another finesse up his sleeve.

39.♖xd4! The correct way to return the exchange.

39...♘xb1 40.♗xb4

The knight has been caught.

40...e5

After 40...♖a8 41.♔e3 ♘a3 42.♔d3 ♖b8 43.c5 ♘b5 44.♖d7 Black would have saved his knight but not the game. The c-pawn is going to decide the issue.

41.♖d1 ♖xc4 42.♖xb1 ♖xg4 43.♗d6 ♖f4+ 44.♔e3 ♖f5 45.♔e4

Black resigned.

This yielded me a 3-1 lead. However, at this point my sleep problems raised their ugly heads again. In the final two games I played so badly that I was lucky to still win the match by the slightest of margins. ■

Hoogeveen 2015

					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Jan Timman	IGM	NED	2562	½	½	1	1	0	½	3½	2605
2	Jorden van Foreest	IGM	NED	2548	½	½	0	0	1	½	2½	2505

Simon Williams

NEW IN CHESS

CURRENT RATING: **2439**
DATE OF BIRTH: **November 30, 1979**
PLACE OF BIRTH: **Guildford, UK**
PLACE OF RESIDENCE: **Godalming, UK**

What is your favourite colour?
The green of the English countryside.

What kind of food makes you happy?
Most food makes me happy, but I always look forward to an English Sunday Roast.

And what drink?
In the day coffee, then at night a nice white wine or even a can of Super Tennents beer.

Who is your favourite author?
Dennis Wheatley.

What was the best book you ever read?
Too many to mention, but I did enjoy *A Scanner Darkly* by Philip K. Dick.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
Hard to pick one! *Seven Samurai*, *Heat* and *Braveheart* were great.

What is your favourite TV series?
At the moment, *Game of Thrones*, *Vikings* and *Sons of Anarchy*.

Do you have a favourite actor?
I used to enjoy watching Chong, from Cheech and Chong, but probably Val Kilmer after he played Jim Morrison in *The Doors*.

And a favourite actress?
Scarlett Johansson.

What music do you like to listen to?
Normally hard rock. My favourite bands being The Doors, Guns N' Roses, NIN, Nirvana and The Prodigy.

Do you have a favourite painter?
Salvador Dali's work is suitably mad enough for me.

What is your best result ever?
Probably some blitz event in Reykjavik a long time ago.

What is the best game you ever played?
I tend not to play good games, but interesting games. My first game in the French League, in 2007 against Magnus Carlhammer, was a good example of this.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
Tal. Creative genius, whose games defy the computer age.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
Chess for Tigers by Simon Webb and *Brilliancies and Blunders* by Ian Mullen and Moe Moss.

What is the best chess country?
Iceland.

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?
Sitting still for long periods of time.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
Laziness and a feeling of entitlement.

What is it that you appreciate most in a person?
Flair and being honourable.

What is it that you dislike in a person?
Back stabbing and 'moaners'.

Do you have any superstitions concerning chess?
The normal pen one. I have to throw mine away after losing. Which means I have gone through a lot of pens.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
I am quite happy, but some kind of rock musician would be interesting.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
Jim Morrison, Keith Moon and Jesus would be interesting.

What is the best piece of advice you were ever given?
Don't believe anything you hear and only half the things that you see.

Is there something you'd love to learn?
Shaolin Kung Fu.

Where is your favourite place in the world?
There are many, but I have good memories of Glencoe in Scotland.

What is your greatest fear?
Losing those close to me.

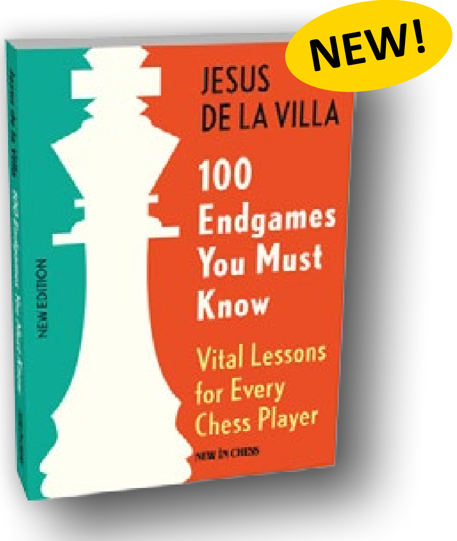
If you could change one thing in the chess world, what would it be?
More money for professional players, and not just the top 10 in the world.

What is the stupidest rule in chess?
En passant seems a bit strange to me.

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
It has kept me out of trouble (for the most part), whilst giving me focus, great friends and an enjoyable passion. So yes!

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
Chess doesn't drive people mad. It keeps mad people sane –Bill Hartston.

Some recent NEW IN CHESS books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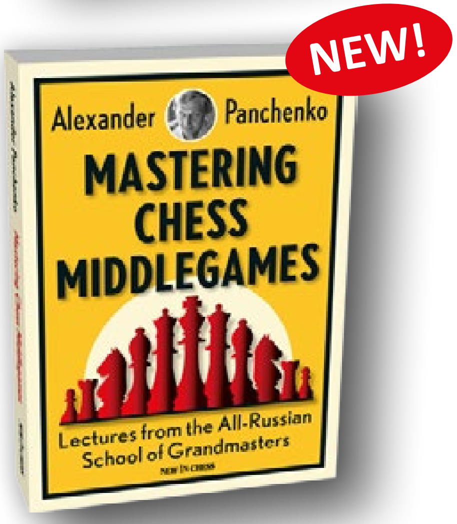
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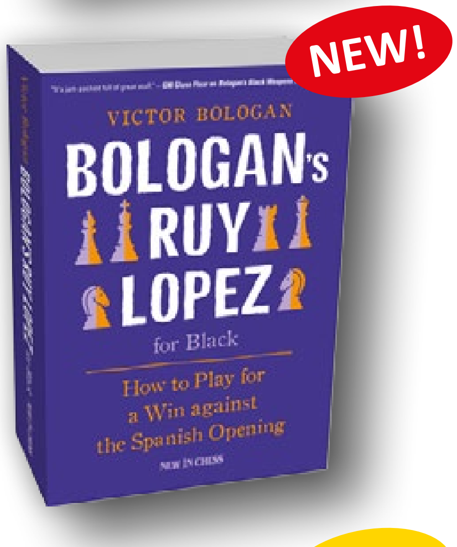
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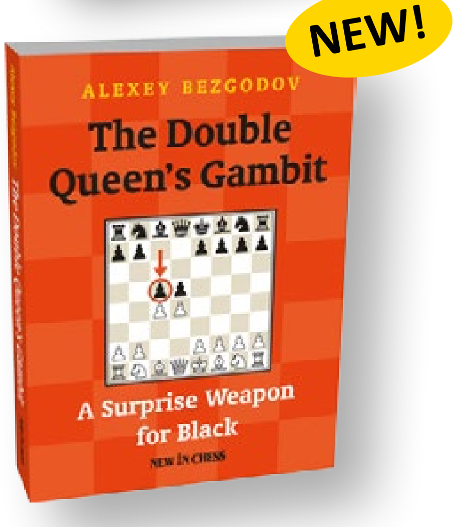
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